

## Ready for Kindergarten Meeting

Tuesday, January 6, 2015, Bemidji District Office

**Attendees:** Ami Aalgaard, Sandy Eberhart, Jolene Enerson, Stephanie Hubbard, Jen Kondos, Jason Luksik, Kathy Palm, Wendy Templin, Kathy VanWert, Vicki Wangberg, Pat Welte, Tami Wesely

### Minutes:

1. We started the meeting at 9:00 a.m. by discussing the handouts:
  - a. World's Best Workforce: All Students Ready for Kindergarten
  - b. Title I Schoolwide Plans: Transition of Preschool Children
  - c. Leech Lake Head Start Early Childhood Transition Agreement
  
2. Then we discussed what we are currently doing to prepare students for kindergarten:

#### How Does Early Childhood Prepare Students and Parents for Kindergarten?

##### Current Programming:

- The School Readiness program math and reading curriculums are aligned with the elementary, and their teachers have received training on the curriculum and the state standards.
- School Readiness serves 140 four-year-olds (80 at BSU & 60 at Community Services Center 2-3 days per week.
- Special education inclusion is allowed 3 slots per class of 20, and those students attend for free.
- School Readiness serves 80 three-year-olds one half day per week.
- Special Education serves the needs of their birth-3 children through their Home Based program.
- Over 50% of School Readiness students qualify for free lunch, and any parent can write a letter stating what they can afford, so the program is affordable for everyone.
- School Readiness piloted the *Desired Results Development Profile (DRDP)* assessment last year and will send the 2014-2015 results to the schools where their students attend kindergarten. If we can get this data in an electronic format, we can upload it to the Viewpoint Data Warehouse , and this information will follow students as they advance through our district.
- Last year early childhood completed 386 Early Childhood Screenings in addition to the screenings completed by the Early Childhood Special Education program. Early childhood completed 423 Early Childhood Screenings in 2013-2014.
- Early childhood is working to increase the number of students screened by posting information at Laundromats, thrift stores, grocery stores, Walmart, food shelf, etc. As an incentive, they provide the students who are screened with a T-shirt.
- Early childhood provided Early Childhood Screening at the area preschools and during elementary conferences last year.
- In the fall, early childhood sends the Early Childhood Screening results to the schools where

## How Does Early Childhood Prepare Students and Parents for Kindergarten?

their students attend kindergarten.

- The early childhood staff are Parent Aware Certified and receive a \$76,000 grant that provides student scholarships for their programs.
- The transition to kindergarten is often scarier for parents than for their children, so ECFE provides parents with skills and activities such as:
  - Every Friday for two hours, ECFE encourages families to participate in the Movement and Playtime provided at the Boys and Girls Club in conjunction with Bemidji Parks & Recreation
  - August 27, 2014, Open House & Ice Cream Social
  - September 23, 2014, An Evening at Buena Vista
  - February 26, 2015, Ready for Kindergarten where they tell parents about the typical school day, provide a panel of kindergarten teachers and parents, and provide information about the food program and busing.
  - May 7, 2015, All Aboard for Kindergarten provides a bus ride for parents and students.
- Early childhood has found more success reaching the families who need their program the most by taking the program to the parents. They meet with teen and other parents at Evergreen Housing, the jail, Sanford child birth classes.
- Because parents work and cannot get their child to the program for a half day, School Readiness also offers Wrap around Child Care. This has increased preschool participation.
- Last summer School Readiness provided a free Kindergarten Boot Camp for students who had never participated in preschool activities. They provided two one-week sessions and focused on school routines and social emotional skills. The parent evaluation showed that this was a great success, and they plan to continue the Kindergarten Boot Camp. Elementary schools would like to know which students attend next summer.
- Gather & Grow: Early childhood provides information for licensed day cares about Early Childhood Screening and preparing students for kindergarten.
- Early childhood teachers go to the home day cares to provide literacy training.

### History:

- Bemidji's early childhood program, Northwest MN Foundation, and Title I worked together to bring kindergarten, Title I and early childhood teachers; day care and preschool providers; and parents together to discuss Getting Ready for Kindergarten three nights during the 2008-2009 school year.
- During 2009-2010, that group addressed Social and Emotional Development.

### Challenges:

- Transportation is the biggest barrier, and those who need the programming the most are often the ones who do not have access.
- No lunch program is available, and students must bring their own lunch to preschool.
- For parents who work, half day preschool does not work for them. We need full-day programs.
- Lack of space: We look forward to moving preschool programs to Paul Bunyan when the new

### How Does Early Childhood Prepare Students and Parents for Kindergarten?

Grade 4-5 elementary school is built. This will allow better communication and less travel for early childhood staff. The guidelines are different for 4-year-old programs, and they will need bathrooms in every classroom.

- It is difficult to reach the families of children who most need preschool and parenting services.

### How do Elementary Schools Prepare Students and Parents for Kindergarten?

#### Current Programming:

- Early Childhood Screening information is entered on the district Skyward system.
- We have a Leech Lake Head Start Transition Plan in place, and Stephanie Hubbard is working with Bi-County CAP to update their plan.
- Paul Bunyan Elementary works with Leech Lake Head Start and provides their students: classroom activities, school tour, and playground activities. Leech Lake Head Start invites district staff to attend their fall and spring advisory meetings.
- In the spring of the year, early childhood teachers meet with the elementary principals, special education and Title I teachers to discuss the transition for students and their IEP needs.
- Kindergarten teachers review Head Start and other early childhood records.
- Kindergarten registration takes place at the elementary schools, and parents and students are able to see the facilities and meet kindergarten teachers and principals at that time.
- During orientation the elementary schools provide parents and students a tour of their schools, games, and reading and math web site resources.
- Title I schools provide kindergarten packets to assist parents with reading and math activities for their children. The principals would like kindergarten packets provided for all kindergartners like Title I used to do.
- Schools provide kindergarten parents the *What to Expect in Kindergarten* brochure, a supply list, reading tips, and other development information, plus information from the school nurse.
- Schools provide Kindergarten Orientation Day, Kindergarten Back to School Night, or a mini school day before school starts when parents and kindergartners tour the school and meet staff. Some schools also provide a book and tips for parents for helping their child succeed in school.
- Kindergarten teachers provide a Kindergarten Screening three times a year to determine individual needs and progress.
- Schools assess all kindergartners in the fall, winter, and spring and progress monitor as needed using AIMSweb math and reading assessments.
- Kindergarten parents serve on School Improvement Teams and are welcomed to join the Parent Teacher Organization.
- The district provides a K-1 program at Paul Bunyan Elementary for 5-year-old students who are not yet ready for kindergarten. This program is not funded by the state and serves 40 students every year.

### How do Elementary Schools Prepare Students and Parents for Kindergarten?

- Solway Elementary Title I provides weekly preschool Tiger Cub bags with reading and materials to help preschool children transition to school
- Schools provide activities for preschool children during family involvement events.

#### History:

- Title I Stimulus provided a half-day four-year-old morning and afternoon program at Central Elementary. We saw great results with this program, and students started kindergarten more prepared. When space became an issue at the elementary schools, we had to move that program and teacher to School Readiness's Jack and Jill program at BSU. Principals would like to see four-year-old programs at every elementary school.

#### Challenges:

- **Lack of Space:** We have overcrowding at every elementary school, causing us to move the kindergarteners from three elementary schools to Paul Bunyan. The overcrowding will be corrected in the fall of 2016 when grades 4 and 5 move to the new elementary school. Then the kindergarten students will return to the existing elementary schools to become K-3 schools.
- We need to plan the transition for kindergarten students back to their home schools.
- **Mobility:** We have high district mobility, so students often move from one elementary school to another. For that reason, we need to make sure our educational experience is the same from one school to the next.
- It is hard to reach the families whose children need the most educational services.

### 3. Are there other ways we can improve the transition to kindergarten?

- The Alternative Education Center could have parent classes at that location because many of those students are young parents.
- Early childhood could create a preschool packet that is given to families when their children attend Early Childhood Screening. This would be different from the kindergarten packet and could include: T-shirt, book, magnet with early childhood information, and developmental information for parents.
- When we want to reach the hard-to-reach families, we can follow early childhood's practice of posting info at: Laundromats, thrift stores, grocery stores, Walmart, food shelf, etc.
- Implement information in the article Kathy VanWert provided: *The Primary Years Agenda: Strategies to Guide District Action*.
- Early Childhood Screening is short staffed. We could hire screeners who would do this task instead of the current staff, similar to what we do with the AIMSweb test proctors. Stephanie and Kathy will talk to Cabinet about this idea.
- Saturdays are family friendly days to offer Early Childhood Screening.
- When Sandy Eberhart and Early Childhood plan Early Childhood Screening for next year, Stephanie Hubbard would like to be involved to make sure it fits the needs of special education children.

- As we prepare for the new grade 4-5 school, we also need to plan for the K-3 schools and not lose sight of the needs of our younger students.
- We can continue to provide kindergarten registration at each elementary school.
- Early childhood can provide the schools with the list of students who attend summer Kindergarten Boot Camp.
- Check on the progress of the DVD we started last year, *Getting Your Child Ready For Kindergarten*. Bryan Hammitt's video students were videotaping, but they realized this is more work than high school students are capable. Our plan is to produce a Bemidji DVD that we can give to parents, preschools, daycares, and post on our website.

4. To do List:

- Sandy Eberhart & early childhood teachers: Work to provide more preschool experiences for all children.
- Sandy Eberhart, Kathy Palm, and Stephanie Hubbard: Explain to Cabinet the need for an Early Childhood Screening team to offer more options that meet parents' schedules.
- Early childhood: Provide the elementary schools with a list of students who attend summer Kindergarten Boot Camp.
- Sandy Eberhart, Stephanie Hubbard, early childhood, & elementary principals: Continue to meet every spring to discuss the needs of potential kindergarten students.
- Early childhood, Sandy Eberhart, Jacque Pearce & Kathy Palm: Check if the *Desired Results Development Profile* (DRDP) results can be made available electronically, so we can upload it into the Viewpoint Data Warehouse.
- Kathy Palm: Check on the status of the *Getting Your Child Ready for Kindergarten* DVD and work with Bennett Aube to see how best to produce the DVD.
- Stephanie Hubbard: Work with Bi-County CAP to update their transition plan.
- Jolene Enerson, Karin Revering, & elementary principals: Provide kindergarten registration and school information at their schools.
- Kathy Palm: Plan to support kindergarten packets for all elementary schools with the 2015-2016 District Title I budget.
- Everyone: Continue the great things you are doing to reach more preschool children and transition them effectively to kindergarten!

5. Should this group meet more often?

Yes, our next meeting will be April 2015 to discuss kindergarten registration, orientation, and other transition activities. Kathy Palm will post the date and time early April.

The meeting adjourned at 10:45 a.m.