

Great Start Collaborative Board Meeting Minutes

June 9, 2008

11:00 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.

Present:

Mona Davison	Tri-County Head Start
Joan Blough	ECIC
Cindy Wickham	Niles Community Schools
Darla Campbell	Watervliet Public Schools
Amy Mitchell	Parent
Joann Schma, Anna Murphy, Rachel Wade	United Way of Southwest Michigan
Jane Schnell	Parent
Tia Miller	Berrien County Council for Children
Cornelia Bueja	Catholic Family Services
Ron Jelinek	State of Michigan Senate
Allen Edlefson	Riverwood Center
Pat Moody	Cornerstone Chamber of Commerce
Jeannette Holton	Michigan Works
Bonita Walters	Parent
Carol Klukas	Berrien County Health Department
Sally Smith	InterCare
Ella Fabel-Ryder	Child Care Resources
Judi Burnison	Capstone Family Support Center
Gretchen Hart	Parent
Thomas Nelson	Berrien County Court
Erika Oliver	EKO, LLC
Claudia Vescolani, Wendy Mitch,	Berrien RESA
Jeff Siegel, Mark Reigle, Karen Heath	Berrien RESA

New Business:

Jeff Siegel, Superintendent of Berrien County ISD, welcomed the Great Start Collaborative Board members to the Berrien County ISD. He stated that as he has watched the early childhood initiatives in Berrien County grow, he has also watched the number of children placed in special education programs decline.

Anna Murphy, President of United Way of Southwest Michigan, introduced Rachel Wade, newly hired Director of Berrien's Great Start Collaborative. Rachel described her background in marketing and public relations and assured GSC Board members that using her skills to benefit our community's young children is an important aspect of her life. She is married and the mother of two young children.

Claudia Vescolani, Berrien County ISD Early Childhood Supervisor, spoke of the important work that previously funded Great Start Collaborative Boards throughout Michigan have accomplished. History has shown that existing public and privately funded programs are not able to meet the early childhood intervention needs of today's young families. The Great Start Collaborative funding provided through the Early Childhood Investment Corporation provides the opportunity for wide community representation, intentional planning and the development of a community strategic plan.

Claudia introduced Joan Blough, the ECIC Director of Great Start Collaborative Development and Assistance, who described the background of the Great Start Initiative and shared how committed Governor Granholm is to improving the school readiness of every child in the state. Many children start kindergarten unprepared; they may have unidentified health, social-emotional, developmental or learning problems. The Early Childhood Investment Corporation (ECIC) began in 2005 and has raised 9 million dollars from public and private

contributions. ECIC currently has Great Start Collaboratives in 32 large and small counties across Michigan. It is the intention of the Early Childhood Investment Corporation Board that all counties in the state will have funding to establish Great Start Collaboratives by the end of 2008.

The Great Start Collaborate Board meets six times each year to establish and oversee the Berrien GSC Work Plan and Annual Budget. The current "Start Up" funding is for six months; April 1st to September 30th. The "Planning Year" starts in October when a thorough review of data indicators, focus group presentations and the accumulation of public comment lead to the establishment of a community strategic plan. Joan stated that including parents on Great Start Collaborative Boards has been very successful. Parents bring first hand knowledge and expertise to the GSC establishment of a family friendly system of care and education. Twenty percent of the GSC Board members are required to be parents of children under twelve. Approximately 60% of children in Michigan are in childcare. Over the past several years ECIC has pulled together the state's 'movers and shakers' from the public and private sectors with the goal of raising the quality of Michigan's child care system.

Claudia introduced Erika Oliver, a Strategic Planning Consultant who has guided previously funded communities through the establishment of their GSC Community Strategic Plan. She shared her enthusiasm for the work of Great Start Collaborative Directors and Boards and asked everyone attending the meeting to consider chairing or co-chairing one of the five committees.

Upcoming Date: Thursday, August 14, 2008 @ 11:30 a.m. Berrien RESA Conference Rooms B&C

Meeting Adjourned: 1:30 p.m.