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Coalition Update



As we welcome the fall and see our children settling into school, it is time to celebrate the work of our members. We have accomplished much to date; and as we strengthen our partnerships, our children will achieve even greater heights!

The Coalition's vision is that New Britain's Youth, birth through age 24, will have the skills needed to be successful in school, careers and life. We know the work to achieve this vision must be sustained and collaborative, but it is necessary to ensure they reach their full potential.

I hope you enjoy the snapshots written by our Coalition members for this first newsletter. If you want more information, or know others who want to get involved, don't hesitate to contact us.

- Robin Lamott Sparks, Executive Director

Early Learning Strategy Group



The Early Learning Strategy Group has been working towards two large goals for the community. The first is improving the transition to kindergarten throughout the city for our preschoolers. We have targeted a few specific strategies for this goal-planning events for parents: informing them of the transition to kindergarten and what to expect once their child enters the public schools; improving data sharing between preschool and kindergarten teachers; and sharing the importance of attendance in preschool and kindergarten. The second goal is to help children meet developmentally appropriate age milestones for social emotional learning. Ten community preschool classrooms have begun to participate in the Play/Executive Function work that the public schools have been doing for the past couple of years. The goal is to not only help with children's social emotional development, but to also help with the transition to kindergarten by providing a similar atmosphere and framework for students. The group has also started to look at social emotional curriculums and alternate ways to support teachers and students with behavioral needs in the preschool programs.

- Maegan Adams, School Readiness Liaison



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Family Connections Strategy Group



The Family Connections Strategy Group has been working on improving school attendance by learning more about lead poisoning among pre-school and school-age children. The Committee heard a presentation from Kim Ploszaj from the CT Department of Public Health on lead poisoning among children. At the meeting, we agreed to further investigate the Healthy Homes Train the Trainer program: a program designed to teach parents about the dangers of lead poisoning, how to identify a child's risk of being poisoned and how to access state and local resources that would provide additional support to parents struggling with the issue. Lead paint is one entry point to identifying students at risk. Resources such as the Healthy Homes Train the Trainer program support parental involvement in a comprehensive approach to improving health. The Committee will work on sponsoring a Healthy Homes Train the Trainer Program in the Fall, 2018.

- Marie Mormile-Mehler, MSW, VP of Planning and Performance Improvement, Community Mental Health Affiliates, Inc. (CMHA)

Health and Wellness Strategy Group



The Health and Wellness Strategy Group has been focusing on 'quality recess' to combat the obesity epidemic plaguing our youth. For the past 2 years, we have developed and pitched several strategies to give children more time to move and to address the quality and structure of those movement breaks. In 2017, the H&W subgroup presented a best practice of 'Recess before Lunch' to New Britain's Board of Education. The strategy required each school system to alter their schedules and move recess before lunch in order to encourage youth to 'burn off' extra energy prior to eating, which in turn would result in a calmer lunch period and less behavioral issues at lunch and throughout the school day. Students would also be less likely to throw away their nutritious lunch because they wouldn't be rushing to get outdoors for playtime, resulting in each students eating more quality food.

The H&W sub-group also aimed to address what students were doing when they went out for recess and the quality of that playtime – which is important for their social and emotional development. In July 2018, the Coalition proposed to the Board of Education Recess Committee the integration of a program entitled 'Playworks U' which is a virtual learning platform that addresses the structure and quality of recess time. It provides training for recess supervisors, so that playtime can be meaningful and strategic.

Superintendent Nancy Sarra approved the amendments to the School Board Policies to adopt these best practices of 'Recess before Lunch', and Playworks U's 'Intentional recess' strategies. "Every moment is a teaching moment," – Nancy Sarra said as she outlined strong wording in the recess and physical education sections of the district's school policies. Funds were allocated to register for the Playworks U virtual platform, and Vance Elementary School was selected as the pilot school for this program. The Coalition plans to follow up with the pilot school and gather feedback from CSDNB staff and Playworks U liaisons.

- Valerie Rodino Cammarota, Community Wellness Director, YWCA New Britain

Coalition for New Britain's Youth
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185 Main Street, Suite 423, New Britain, CT 06051
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Youth and Workforce Development Strategy Group



During the past year, the Youth and Workforce Development Strategy Group has been working on a number of things. One of the main focuses of the workgroup has been the structure and function of our group dynamic. We have been tinkering with what the right structure is for our group meetings that will allow us to identify the work needed to accomplish and, once identified, will allow us to move the work forward. Y&WD has also spent our time making sure that we are targeting the right ages of our students to focus our energies on in order to be able to create the greatest amount of change and progress for each respective group. During the process of breaking down our goals/objectives/ages, we have been uncovering what our greatest strengths are, as a group and as individual entities. We are now figuring out how to maximize and properly leverage the resources that each respective organization can bring to the table in order to construct and complete goals that fit within the groups' framework. We look forward to continuing to work towards the goal of having all our students graduate high school in four years, college and/or career ready.

- Nick Jakubowski, Co-Executive Director, Pathways/Senderos

Data and Evaluation Committee



Since the rollout of the Comprehensive Plan over a year ago, the Data and Evaluation Committee has continued to meet regularly to focus on the data needs of the Coalition and strategy groups. A data agenda has been developed to align indicators, performance measures, and results. A current Community Report Card is in progress that will highlight different trends, provide comparisons to the state, and include narrative text to provide more context on specific projects. The committee has also discussed the importance of the Developmental Assets Profile and Childhood Obesity and Asthma reports and ways in which the committee can provide support for their continued implementation.

Nghi D. Thai, Ph.D., Associate Professor, Department of Psychological Science. Central Connecticut State University

Department of Children and Families and Vroom!



On March 16, 2018, Robin Lamott Sparks, Executive Director of the Coalition for New Britain's Youth, provided a presentation on Vroom Brain Building Moments at the New Britain Department of Children and Families All Staff Meeting. Vroom is an interactive app that offers thousands of brain building activities for caregivers and children 5 and under. DCF Social Workers walked away with a sampling of activities in English, Spanish and Arabic on a key ring to take on their home visits to provide for the families they serve. Also, the New Britain Office has placed information about Vroom on a bulletin board in the visitation area for families to learn about the program and an easy access plastic pouch for families to take the key ring of activities for use during their visits or to take home.

- Sarah Flythe, Department of Children and Families

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Training Opportunities



The Coalition has continued to provide professional development to the community based on identified needs and wants of our members. At each Strategy Group, members are asked for training ideas, suggestions, and needs. Through this work, we continue to offer training specifically for afterschool supervisors and direct line staff, in our Academy. In addition, we are offering high-level leadership development training to build the next generation of capable and efficient leaders within the community.

Upcoming trainings may include: Advocacy for non-profits, DISC - assessment, Facilitation, How to effectively engage with youth in your afterschool program, and Trauma-informed care.

If you have any suggestions for training topics please reach out to Teresa Nieves, Collective Impact Operations Manager, at Teresa@coalition4nbyouth.org.

Join Us!



Coalition
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The next Leadership Group meeting will be October 26, from 1:00-4:00 pm at City Hall, 5th floor, room 504.

Our meeting will feature:

Nancy Sarra, Superintendent of the Consolidated School District of New Britain, as well as updates on the work being done in our Strategy Groups.

Hope to see you there!

Membership Renewals



It is that time of year again! Memorandum of Understanding agreements are now available for 2018-19. Please consider joining or renewing your membership.

Fees have not changed and remain \$75 for an organization and \$25 for an individual, in addition to active participation in a Strategy Group or Committee. Member Organizations will be listed on the Coalition website; Individuals may have their name listed as well if they would like. Checks should be made out to the "United Way of Central and Northeastern Connecticut."

Please contact Robin at the Coalition if you have any questions.

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