

Onondaga Citizens League meeting notes—Sept. 24, 2013

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Meeting held at ProLiteracy, 104 Marcellus St., Syracuse

Co-chairs: Paul Predmore and Laurie Black

Attendees: Harold Breon, Ginny Carmody, Jeff Craig, Glenda Criss, Chris Flynn, Maria Gill, Melissa Hidek, Peter Knoblock, Cynda Lamb, Janet Park, Joan Royle, Diane Toscano, Nathalie Warren, Carol Williams

Presenters: Kim Scott, managing partner of Literacy Powerline

OCL: Sandra Barrett and Becky Sernett

Summary: The committee learned about community systems and educational frameworks that lead to successful collaborations in early childhood education initiatives.

Upcoming Meetings: All regular study committee meetings will be held from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m., on alternating Tuesdays and Thursdays, at ProLiteracy, 104 Marcellus Street, Syracuse. The next meetings will be:

- Thursday, October 10—topic TBA

Special Presentation:

There will be a special meeting on Wednesday, October 23, from 3 – 4 p.m. at ProLiteracy, with Ralph Smith, senior vice president at the Annie E. Casey Foundation and managing director of the Campaign for Grade-Level Reading.

Subcommittees:

Committee members are invited to participate on one (or more) of the subcommittees listed below. Subcommittee topics can be considered the main themes that have emerged so far in the Early Childhood Education discussions, and these themes need further research, development and refinement. Subcommittees meet separately from the larger committee to discuss these topics, gather research/resources and eventually present what they've learned to the main committee. To sign up for a subcommittee, contact Sandra Barrett at 315-443-4846 or ssbarret@uc.syr.edu.

- Local Data and Funding: 0-5 population and poverty census data; child care supply and need; local statistics on school readiness, literacy, absenteeism, graduation rates, etc.; public investments in child care in Onondaga County.
- Family Supports: current parenting programs and other family support programs; summer and after-school programs.
- Delivery System: quality and effectiveness indicators; networks and partnerships; priorities.

- Model Programs and Practices: summary of national research findings on early childhood education and learning; examples of effective programs from other communities; examples of local best practices.

Today’s Topic: Community Systems and Education Frameworks

Kim Scott, managing partner of Literacy Powerline (literacypowerline.com), began her presentation with a discussion of the state of Arizona’s “First Things First” early childhood care framework (azftf.gov). The framework focuses on children aged zero- to five years old. (A copy of Scott’s PowerPoint presentation can be found online at onondagacitizensleague.org.)

“This is a system that’s working and demonstrating results,” she said of First Things First.

In 2006, Arizona voters passed “Proposition 203,” which provided the funds and statewide framework for the initiative. A new state board dedicated to early childhood development and health was created, and the board later adopted the name, First Things First. According to the First Things First Website, Proposition 203 included the following principles:

- *Local communities must come together to plan and administer what works best in their community.*
- *It must be flexible enough to accommodate the unique demographics of our state.*
- *It must be transparent and held accountable for outcomes.¹*

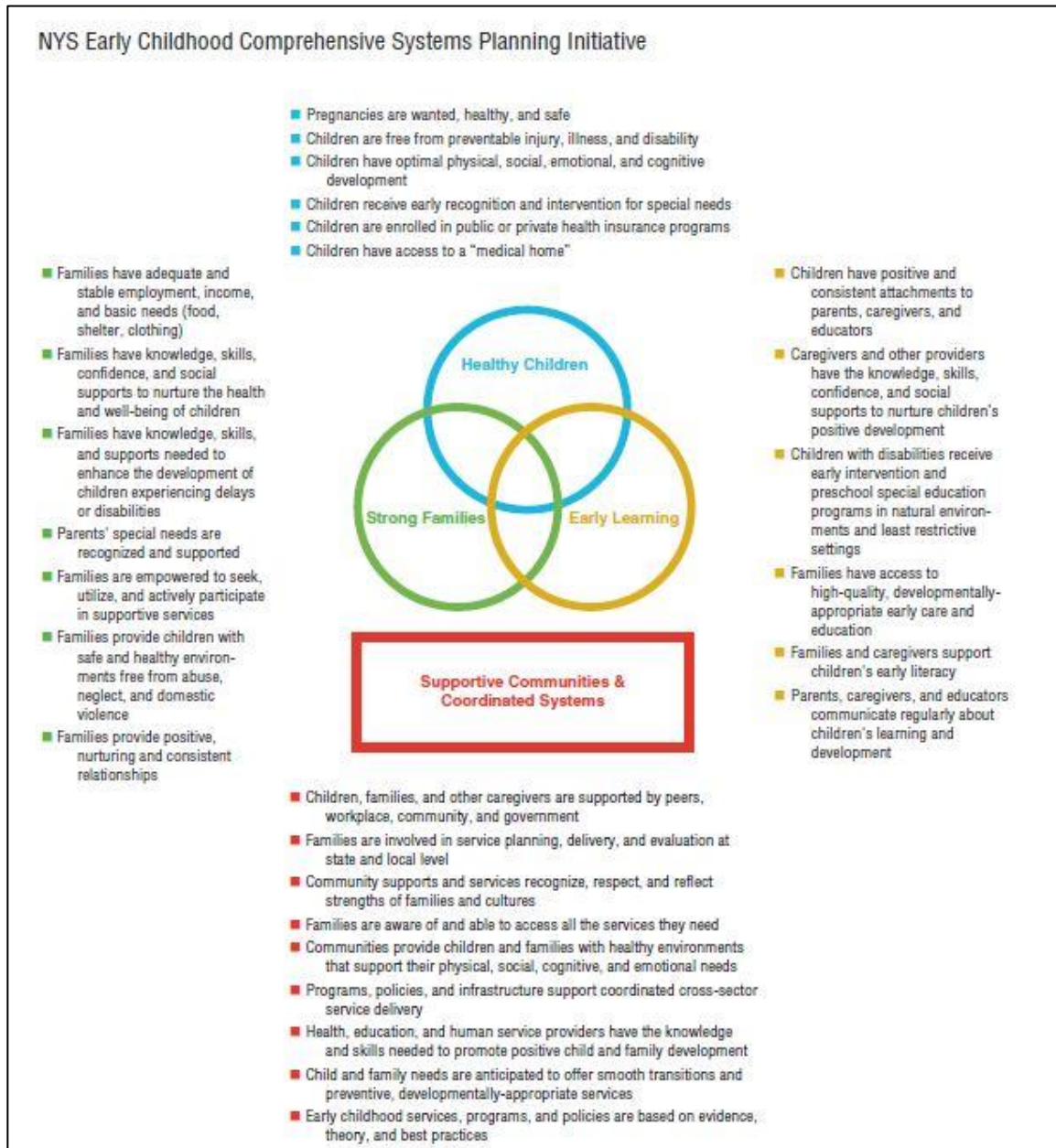
The public-private collaboration determined that children need:

Health needs	Family/Support needs	Education needs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health & Early Intervention • Access to Services • Oral Health • Early Screening • Nutrition • Injury Prevention • Mental Health 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supportive Families & Literacy • Parenting Resources • Native Language & Culture 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality Early Care & Education • Quality Care Centers • Informed Parents • Educated Teachers • Access to Quality

AZ Reads, a statewide campaign for grade-level reading (www.azed.gov/k12-literacy/az-reads), took on the Family/Support and Education portions. AZ Reads focuses on children from zero- to 8 years old.

¹ First Things First: <http://www.azftf.gov/whoweare/history/pages/default.aspx>

Next, Scott showed New York State’s framework for its “Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems Planning Initiative”—



“We really haven’t gotten very far on the actualization,” she said of New York. “Pieces are moving forward, but there’s no coordinated state-level effort at this stage. [...] But that doesn’t mean we can’t move it forward.”

New York's Campaign for Grade Level Reading—which is part of the national Campaign (gradelevelreading.net)—targets the early learning and support systems portions. Communities involved in this campaign include: Buffalo, Rochester, Syracuse, New York City, and Madison, Oneida, and Herkimer counties.

Scott said the OCL study committee needs to determine the scope of the OCL study and what it will recommend for Onondaga County. “Are we thinking about the system as a whole?” she asked, referring to the entire initiative detailed in the New York State framework above. “Or are we thinking early childhood education?”

Several committee members said it seems unrealistic to cut off certain portions of the framework, particularly health and how it relates to childhood development. Scott responded by explaining that the Grade Level Reading Campaign's focus is “easy for people to understand,” and this can be particularly helpful when seeking funding. “To get where we want to go,” she said, “The Campaign [...] is using this approach.”

She would give New York State a grade “C” for its early childhood education initiatives. “We're still fragmented,” she said. But, there are the beginnings of state-level policy support. Recently, Gov. Cuomo announced the “Every Student Present” campaign, which aims to address chronic absenteeism.

On the local level, though, she would give us the grade of a “good, solid ‘B’, and we're working on that ‘B+’.”

OCL co-chair Paul Predmore asked about the federal approach to this issue, and Scott said that the “feds are focusing on the education piece.” She said whether or not one agrees with Obama's proposal for early childhood education (see house.gov/issues/education/early-childhood), the federal support for early childhood learning “demonstrates how important it is for our country.”

She said the area where all three circles in New York's framework overlap is the “sweet spot and that's the hard part. That's [the area that] communities need to tackle.” This needs to be approached in a collective, active fashion. This is called “collective impact.” The Campaign for Grade Level Reading is an example of collective impact.

“Collective impact is about diverse organizations coming together to solve complex problems....” she said.

For collective impact to happen there must be:

- a common agenda,
- shared measurement,
- mutually reinforcing activities,
- continuous communication, and
- backbone organizations.

“If Grade Level Reading can move 8 million kids further down the pipeline, that's potentially enough change for a tipping point in our country,” she said.

As an example for how a community decides upon a common agenda, Scott highlighted San Antonio and its “strategic planning process known as SA2020. A

coalition of education and business leaders, community volunteers and elected officials worked for 18 months to develop a united vision and goals for achievement.”

The initiative was led by San Antonio’s mayor, Julian Castro. More information about the initiative can be found online at www.sa2020.org.

A question was asked how something like SA2020 gets started: Does the mayor need to take the lead? Scott said there are six “typical” types of leaders for collaborative efforts: literacy coalitions, United Way, foundations, political leaders such as mayors, nonprofit organizations and school districts.

For this effort to really work, though, the initiative must have a separate organization with paid staff. Scott pointed to Onondaga County’s Literacy Coalition as an example. “The Literacy Coalition is the lead. ... It does the coordinating, and within it is the cross-sector partnerships and leadership,” she said.

Shared measurement, a requirement to achieving collective impact, is “really hard too,” Scott said. For the Grade Level Reading campaign, all partners are being offered Results Scorecard software and training (resultsscorecard.com) as a tool. Once data can be shared, it can be analyzed. Then, strategies can be developed, and programs can be created to meet strategic goals.

Ginny Carmody, executive director of the Literacy Coalition of Onondaga County, said the coalition is working with its partners to determine how they can share data. Also, last May, OCM-BOCES hosted a meeting of community and school representatives to determine what data is available and how it can be shared, and this resulted in the creation of three committees to work on the issue. “It’s slow-going, but we’re talking,” said Jeff Craig, OCM-BOCES’ assistant superintendent for instructional support services.

Sharing data helps communities “figure out where gaps are and who the players are to fill those gaps,” Scott said. Good, aligned data is also useful when requesting financial support from a funder.

“Nonprofits in coalition communities generate more revenue,” Scott said. They also have more assets, a higher percentage of high school graduates, greater networking ability and a larger number of “creative class” individuals compared to non-coalition communities.

Q&A

“What maintains the momentum behind the coalition?” OCL co-chair Laurie Black asked.

In general, this depends on the coalition’s quality of infrastructure and the level of community engagement, Scott said. It can also depend on the charisma and personality of the coalition leadership.

Next Meeting

The next OCL study committee meeting will be at 11:30 at ProLiteracy on Thursday, Oct. 10.