



COLLABORATIVE FOR COLCHESTER'S CHILDREN

December 2, 2025

Leadership Work Group Meeting

Cragin Memorial Library

9:00-10:30 AM

Attendance: Cindy Praisner, Laurie Buyniski, Kate Byroade, Julia Lash, Eve Hurley, Sarah Russel, Chelsea Long, Erin Howes, Kaitlin Cassidy, Judy O'Meara, Nicole Beauchamp, Kristina Swain, Tiffany Quinn, Teresa Messervy, Jamie Girvin, Dan Sullivan, Jessica Kuckel, Stephanie Calash, Sharon Wilinski, Stacy Ewings

Partner Updates

Cragin- Annual Kindergarten visits took place last week, students came to see the Three Piggy Opera and had a chance to sign up for a library card and check out a book. The December newsletter is now available with a calendar of events and activities. A community wi-fi grant was obtained for the Town of Colchester. This will provide free wi-fi in areas of town including the Town Green, Youth Center, JJIS Baseball field, Rec Plex and Football field. Some concerns were shared about parents' use of phones while children are playing. The group agreed that some messaging would be helpful to remind parents that they should be using technology wisely and be present to watch their children.

Castle- Early Start spaces are full, two new students who started recently are learning the routines. Planning for the Winter Wonderland event, open to the public, visit with Santa.

TVCCA- A new, more permanent, cold shelter is opening and will be staffed by TVCCA. Nurse-Family Partnership is growing as more families come on board. Upcoming training for staff facilitated by DCF, and OEC on Five Protective Factors, looking to close the gap in salaries for staff.

WIC/Family Bridge - Case load is increasing, Family Bridge program is expanding into Colchester for families who use Backus for delivery. Nurse Supervisor attended Safe Sleep training and is now the first trained instructor in New England, and will be training others.

Parks & Recreation- The Holiday Homecoming event will take place on December 6th. Planning for Summer Camp will begin.

CPS Special Education- No updates to report at this time.

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Parent Council Updates - Parent Ambassadors held an event at the Storywalk on Veterans Day, a school day off, and provided families with a snack and nature scavenger hunt. Planning for the Letters to Santa table for the Holiday Homecoming event on Saturday, Dec 6th and also distributing an ornament craft. PA's will be running the next book club meeting on Monday, Feb 9th, Good Inside, Part 1. The last Parent Council meeting was a success with 3 new parents joining and a PJ Potluck event is planned for Thursday, January 8th. Planning Parent Cafe

event for March, topic may be nutrition on a budget. J. Girvin offered to assist as a nutrition expert. PA's may help with greeting families that come to CES for Preschool Screenings by handing out bags with resources and play materials and sharing information about Sparkler. PA's will be attending training on Monday, December 8th in Norwich hosted by OEC and Shine.

C3 General Updates and Events- C. Praisner reviewed upcoming programs for the Winter session. Play & Learn Groups begin the week of January 12th. Parent Education workshops for January include Circle of Security, Conscious Discipline- Composure and Good Inside Book Club. Early Start spaces are all full. Classroom observations are taking place with the use of a new assessment tool and requirements. A local needs assessment will be developed in January, which will gather data on community strengths and gaps to inform a community plan. This assessment is due in the spring and will utilize a toolkit provided by the Office of Early Childhood. The OEC will summarize the findings and a periodic update will occur to assess as needs change.

L. Buyniski will be leaving the position of Program Coordinator at the end of the year. She was thanked by C. Praisner for her dedication. L. Buyniski expressed her appreciation for the opportunity. Hiring for this role will likely take place in January.

C. Praisner provided updates on the Early Learning Development Standards, noting significant changes in the area of art, and offered to distribute updated documents.

K. Byroade shared that there will be a legislative hearing for the Preschool Endowment Fund next week for Early Childhood and reviewed how to submit testimony and/or speak at the hearing.

McKinney-Vento Homeless Update - No update to report.

OEC/Shine Updates -

K-Waiver - C. Praisner highlighted the widespread misunderstanding regarding the elimination of kindergarten waivers, noting that many communities believed they had been removed. She pointed out that the Early Childhood Alliance may not advocate for their elimination in the upcoming legislative session due to other priorities. Challenges surrounding these waivers were discussed, particularly regarding inconsistent success rates among students and the emotional impact on families. Data in Colchester shows that many students who receive waivers are not meeting expectations in K and grade 1. She expressed concern over the lack of a standardized assessment process, which leads to inconsistencies across districts. Praisner advocated for a more stable and equitable system that would benefit both families and children's developmental needs.

Budget Review - C. Praisner provided a budget update (some payments for program facilitation still pending), indicating that spending is on track and discussed plans for a more substantial community event in March with the unspent Community Cafe funds.

Organizational Structure Changes - C. Praisner reviewed the draft of the Organizational Structure document highlighting the connection with OEC and Shine and also noted that there may be some changes based on roles and responsibilities. An ad hoc team will meet to review a draft of the by-laws in January and potentially add this topic to the February meeting agenda.

Leadership Work Group Membership - The council members briefly discussed the membership structure and roles of the LGP community table. Currently, we do not have anyone in the healthcare provider role. Council discussed some leads for filling this seat.

FLIP IT Strategy - The FLIP IT Haley video was played for the council members to provide a deeper understanding of the training model and the origin of the program. C. Praisner mentioned that FLIP IT will be offered for parents and caregivers in February and Town & Country daycare in January. If there is any additional interest in bringing this program to the school communities or families, please reach out to C. Praisner.

Upcoming Meeting Dates for 2025-2026

Tuesdays, 9:00-10:30 am- February 10, April 21

Submitted by:

Laurie Buyniski, Program Coordinator