

Kent County
Family & Children's
Coordinating Council



KCFCCC Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, April 11, 2023 1:00 p.m. – 2:30 p.m.

Lake Michigan and Huron Rooms, Kent County Health Department
700 Fuller Ave NE – Grand Rapids, MI 49503

**Council Members/
Alternates Present:**

Tracie Coffman, Kirstin Gietzen, Madelyn Hall, Kendrick Heinlein, Maureen Kirkwood, Ron Koehler, Jason Loepp, Deborah McNabb, Eileen McNeil, Mary Muliatt, Scott Smith, Michelle VanDyke

Council Members Absent: Misti DeVries, Kristen Gietzen, Scott Smith, Michelle Van Dyke, Adam London, Kendrick Heinlein, Leadraine Roby, Ron Koehler, Shaunte Paul-Oliver, Tracey Silas, Tracey Fountain

Council Partners/Guests: Brandy Lovelady-Mitchell, Heather Boswell, Gwenden Dueker, Karen Lezan, Sonia Noorman, Bridget Cheney, Keenan King, Wende Randall, Montel Pierre, Emmett Harrison Jr., Jennifer Headley-Nordman

Kent County Staff: Christopher Eakin, Jennifer James

1. Welcome & Call to Order

Candace Cowling called the meeting to order at 1:07 p.m. Roundtable introductions were completed.

2. Approval of Agenda and Minutes of February 7, 2023

Ron Koehler made a motion to accept the February 7, 2023, meeting minutes, which was supported by Mary Muliatt. The minutes were approved unanimously by voice vote.

3. Public Comment

There was none.

4. Grand Rapids Southeast Promise Neighborhood (GRSEPN) Project

GRSEPN Project Co-Directors Dr. Patricia Reeves from Western Michigan University and Bridget Cheney from Grand Rapids Public Schools along with Montell Pierre from LINC UP presented information about the GRSEPN project. The project's other co-directors are Dr. Jianping Shen from Western Michigan University and Candace Cowling from Family Futures.

The project is funded through a federal grant. Its purpose is to provide resources, supports, and opportunities to help communities lift themselves up and become places where raising children, having families and living a good life can happen. The program was modeled after

the Harlem Children’s Zone that was established in New York and championed by Geoffrey Canada. Because of its success, it became part of the U.S. educational policy agenda through the U.S. Department of Education.

Promise Neighborhoods are both places and a strategy that are designed around place-based community development and results-based accountability. They require a strong lead organization and community partners and seek to offer a continuum of cradle to career solutions. Projects are evaluated against 10 success indicators.

The GRSEPN project is unique from other nationwide Promise Neighborhood locations in that it approaches community development from an appreciative, strengths-based, and growth-focused approach as opposed to identifying deficits or elements that need to be fixed. It also utilizes High Impact Leadership (HIL) principles, practices, and processes. Other unique elements include providing half of funding to schools, selecting partners with strong track records of engaging in the community were chosen, and emphasizing solutions that use evidence-based practices.

The grant period is five years and can be renewed annually contingent on demonstrated progress and results. It is possible to compete for an additional five years thereafter. In the first year, partners sought to establish systems, processes, infrastructure, and relationships as well as complete initial scopes of work. In year 2, which is the current phase, partners engage community in planning and revise their work plans accordingly. Changes will be made in the 2023-24 school year. From the second to fourth years, change initiatives are implemented and data as outlined in the Data Plan are monitored. Finally, in year 5, impact and sustainability are assessed and whether to submit a new application is considered.

The project’s purpose is to increase the rate and degree of positive change on key indicators of student success, parent/family success, and community success. Its mission is to “support GR Southeast children and families in achieving educational success and building healthy, successful, and stable lives.” Its vision is to “provide evidence-based and equity producing learning experiences and family supports that: build on strengths; remove barriers to equity; and contribute to health, well-being, and family stability.”

Partners include Grand Rapids Public Schools, Western Michigan University’s HIL Project and CSR, Promise Neighborhood partners (including Kent Intermediate School District, Baxter Community Center, Early Learning Neighborhood Collaborative, Family Futures, Grand Rapids Community College, LINC UP). Project evaluation is being done by Grand Valley State University’s Johnson Center, along with other project evaluation partners: Western Michigan University, Michigan State University, and the University of Kentucky.

There are 13 GRPS schools on the southeast side (1 high school, 1 6th-12th school, 1 middle school, and 10 elementary schools).

The GRSEPN project is working on coordinating “cradle to career” initiatives, starting with the earliest moments in a child’s life to give them a head start (e.g. parenting skills, nutrition education, early childhood screenings) and continuing on through quality pre-K programs, strong K-12 academic programs, and supports to help children take opportunities available to them. Additionally, there is a focus on helping prepare children early to think about their future by providing them with exposure to different opportunities.

The project has a robust data plan that consists of three tiers. Tier 1 are the 10 success indicators as determined by the federal government. Seeing positive change in these indicators is necessary for continued funding. The indicators are:

Education

1. Children enter kindergarten ready to succeed in school
2. Students are proficient in core academic subjects
3. Students successfully transition from middle school grades to high school
4. Youth graduate from high school
5. High school graduates obtain a postsecondary degree, certification, or credential

Family and Community Support

6. Students are healthy
7. Students feel safe at school and in their community
8. Students live in stable communities
9. Families and community members support learning in Promise Neighborhood Schools
10. Students have access to 21st-century learning tools

Tier 2 is data consisting of the 14+ GRSEPN project indicators that track progress in the short term. Tier 3 is data collected on implementation progress and used to monitor measures and benchmarks.

Each partner is establishing a work plan to help drive their efforts in a way that is aligned and coordinated with other partners as well as the project's data plan.

Montell Pierre from LINC UP shared about his work as a Promise Neighborhood liaison. In his role, he helps parents, the community, and schools come together by building trust.

Next steps for the project include developing a communication plan and tools; strengthening and leveraging existing community initiatives; implementing school-based high impact strategies; implementing community-based high impact strategies; and developing a community-facing data dashboard.

Once the presentation concluded, members and guests asked questions related to workforce instability in the education field, how to get connected to the project, how the GRSEPN project can connect with other collaborations and initiatives, and other questions about the Promise Neighborhood program structure and funding. Of note, the grant amount was just under \$30 million to be spread across 5 years. Subawards range from \$100,000 to \$3 million to partners depending on the magnitude of the role they play in the project. Western Michigan University is the project's fiduciary and distributes funding to subrecipients every year.

5. **Strategic Plan Update**

Candace Cowling said the Executive Committee has taken the feedback provided at the February 7 Full Council meeting and is working to further flesh out the plan. The council will be updated as progress is made.

6. **Agency Updates**

In the interest of time, agency updates and icebreaker questions were combined. The icebreaker questions asked were "What brought you to join KCFCCC?" and "What have you done recently in the interest of children and families?"

Maureen Kirkwood said that she joined KCFCCC because she believes in a collective impact approach, and it is important to engage in policy at the county level. For updates, she reported

that she is sending two staff to the upcoming Community Organizing and Family Issues (COFI) training in Chicago, which will focus on community and parent engagement.

Kristin Gietzen said that she joined KCFCCC because she was interested in systems changes where partners come together to address issues. She is interested in learning more about how GRSEPN interacts with K-Connect, Kent School Services Network, etc. She reported that Arbor Circle has their annual spring event at the end of May, and she invited everyone to it.

Mary Muliatt said she joined KCFCCC because she wanted to help coordinate and work together to bring about systems changes as well as have a better understanding of the resources this county has. For her report, she stated there have been a lot of legislative and administrative conversations recently about shoring up the children's welfare system. There is a focused effort on helping children in foster care identify relatives, which can help reduce trauma. She also reported that D.A. Blodgett-St. John's staff will be moving into their new building on May 1, and a ribbon cutting will take place on August 10. She will pass along the invitation to that event.

Madelyn Hall said she joined KCFCCC to become more aware of resources that might be available to the mothers she supports in her work at the Kent County Health Department. She reported that her program is doing social events for parents every other month.

Eileen McNeil said she joined KCFCCC because the purpose of the council matched with her interests, and she had experience with the foster care system. She stated she would like to help more on communications and legislative advocacy.

Due to time constraints, not every member was able to share their responses to the icebreaker questions or provide an update. Candace Cowling said that those who were not able to share should plan to share at the June 6 meeting. Those unable to share were: Ron Koehler, Scott Smith, Judge Deborah McNabb, Kendrick Heinlein, Michelle VanDyke, Tracie Coffman, and Jason Loepp.

7. **Miscellaneous**

Heather Boswell provided an update that First Steps Kent is releasing Requests for Proposals (RFPs) for the next round of funding. Pre-conferences are scheduled for April 18 and 19. She invited those interested in learning more to attend. Heather stated she would forward the flyer to Christopher Eakin to distribute to council members and partners.

Sonia Noorman reported that the West Michigan Partnership for Children distributed grant funding to five partners. They are also looking at a grant to help stabilize the foster care system workforce.

8. **Adjournment** – Candace Cowling adjourned the meeting at 2:29 p.m. Next meeting is Tuesday, June 6, 2023, at 1:00 p.m.