

NETWORK NEWS

A Newsletter from the Addison County Starting Points Networks
3rd Edition, Spring 2014

Welcome to the latest edition of the Network News. It was a very long and very cold winter. It was a challenge for all of us to keep the children active and happy inside when there were so many days that were too frostbitingly cold to take little children outside. But the miraculous change of seasons has turned our icy wonderland into a magical landscape of vibrant green that glows with the new life of spring.

We come together in our networks to gain knowledge, celebrate successes, share ideas and help each other with problems and challenges. Consistency is an important component in developing secure relationships with children. Consistency is also important in forming close trusting relationships with adults. We encourage members to commit to coming to network meetings monthly.

Network Membership consists of attendance from centers and family child care programs. Our differences and commonalities increase our knowledge and appreciation of the work we do with children.

Each year the network has special events for active network members who demonstrate a commitment to the group through attendance.

- **Provider Appreciation Event** varies each year. We usually have a dinner out or a catered dinner in a child care program and honor the participating members of the networks for their commitment to each other and the work they do with children and families.

This year's Provider Appreciation Dinner will take place on May 31st and will consist of a wellness training and a luncheon. We will share more in our next newsletter.

- **Winter Holiday Party**

We had a wonderful gathering of network providers to share and celebrate the end of a great year. The theme of our holiday party was %music+and providers received bags of musical instrument and books on incorporating music into their childcare programs. Depending upon attendance, providers received up to eight instruments including drums, egg shakers, dancing bell ribbons, rhythm sticks and an assortment of others. We had a delicious meal provided by the leaders along with lots of sharing and merriment.

- **Taking care of me event** provides pampering and support information about taking care of ourselves to relieve stress and prevent burnout.

This year the Provider Appreciation event will include a wellness training and the November meeting will be focused on taking care of me+

Throughout the year the networks also offers:

- **A book group:** This year's book is on newsletters. We will connect the book group discussions with the Strengthening Families+trainings and the Observation and Documentation+training to discuss and explore ways to share program news and activities with parents. We will also investigate ways to educate families on the value of play and how program activities meet the Vermont Early Learning Standards (VELS). We will share ways to set up the components of a newsletter that can be used in a formal newsletter or may be adapted to bulletin boards and wall displays showing photos of the happenings of our programs. We will also discuss how information can be shared safely with parents through emails, blogs, Facebook and other formats.
- **Potluck dinner:** This usually takes place in the fall to share our ideas for goals and meeting activities. The results of this discussion provide the basis of the goals and objectives of the Starting Points grant for the next year. This year we had a pot luck dinner in January to kick off the New Year. The food theme was soup+and we feasted on a variety of hot and hearty soups. We welcomed some new members and shared what will be happening in the Networks this year.
- **Support meetings and trainings:** Throughout the year providers express their needs and challenges. They are given support and encouragement. Trainings are provided to meet these needs. Providers are given continual support through email, texting, phone conversations and in-person. Providers are given help and support with applying to STARS, achieving a CDA credential, national accreditation and any professional development and program improvements they want to achieve. Providers are connected to their local VB3 mentor, Gerri Barrows.

If you would like to contribute to the newsletter, contact editors – Muffy Kashkin Grollier at muffyvjkq@yahoo.com or Gerri Barrows at kidsfirstdhcc@yahoo.com.

WHAT'S HAPPENING AROUND THE COUNTY?

Middlebury, Vergennes, New Haven, Bristol and Orwell continue to meet monthly as a group in New Haven on the second Monday of the month. Orwell will provide a local meeting in Orwell on the third Monday of the month for the providers who cannot travel. Providers in the Orwell vicinity should contact Muffy if they would like to meet in Orwell. The directors meet once a month in Middlebury.

The support network topics for 2014 are:

- January . Pot luck
- February . Storytelling
- March . Break

- April . Observation and Documentation
- May . Gardening and Provider Appreciation
- June . Book group
- July . book group
- August . Break - or book group depending upon interest
- September . Pot luck and support
- October . Cooking
- November . Taking Care of Me and year end wrap up
- December . Christmas Party

Through a grant from Vermont Birth to Three the Starting Points Networks are offering four focused trainings on our meeting night. In February we did %Storytelling+. Our objectives included:

- The benefits of stories in early childhood development
- The ways the storyteller (you) can enhance a story
- The various props used to enhance storytelling
- Ways to extend a story's theme into all developmental domains and learning centers

“If you want children to be intelligent, read them fairytales. If you want your children to be more intelligent, read them more fairytales”. . Albert Einstein

“When I examine myself and my methods of thought, I come to the conclusion that the gift of fantasy has meant more to me than any other talent for abstract positive thinking”. . Albert Einstein

The story of the %Little Red Hen+was used to exemplify the different components of storytelling. We used the puppets received participants received as part of the Infant Toddler Curriculum Support Network last year.. This book will also be used in connection to gardening activities this summer and in the fall we will be baking bread in the Cooking training, just like the little red hen!

The second training the network offered was %Observation and Documentation+. The learning components of this training were:

- The Importance of Observation and Documentation
- Ways to gather and document information about a child
- Identifying kinds of observation
- Defining developmental milestones
- Identifying developmental domains assessed in early childhood programs
- Planning an Observation
- Brainstorming ways to share documentation with parents

This training incorporated aspects of the %Strengthening Families+trainings into the ideas for documentation so that providers can use their photographs and children's work to share with parents what the children are learning in their everyday activities.

The third training we offered this spring was %Gardening+. Our objectives included:

- Identifying how gardening benefits children.
- Describing the components of a rich soil mixture.
- Identifying the different needs of in-ground vs. container gardening.
- Describing companion planting and identify plants that help each other.
- Identifying common garden pests and how to control them without pesticides.

Our network providers are very interested in their outdoor learning environments for children and gardening is only one aspect. We provided books and resources to look at and discussed some of the issues and challenges of working in gardens with children. The providers who attended this workshop will receive a set of books on gardening ideas and activities for children.

Network leaders continue to explore and support the efforts of Network members to provide a natural outdoor playspace that encourages exploration, creativity and learning experiences. Several providers are working on outdoor playscape certification and we are hoping the Traveling Network will be able to visit providers' homes to share and learn about our outdoor learning environments.

Providers are encouraged to attend workshops and conferences and bring back what they have learned and to share with the networks. In October, Gerri attended the VAEYC conference in Killington along with her mentees Cookie Cummings, Jen Cyr, Donna Meacham, and Michelle Sherwin, thanks to scholarships from Vermont Birth to Three. They attended a variety of workshops and continue to use the knowledge they gained to improve their programs and share information with other providers.

COMPUTER COMFORT NETWORK

The Computer Comfort Network wrapped up the year with many providers fulfilling the requirements to complete 12 hours of online training above and beyond licensing requirements. Hundreds of hours of training were accessed by Network members who were able to use their membership until May 2014. Providers gained a vast array of information from courses on stress management, behavioral issues, outdoor learning, autism, curriculum, health and safety, and nutrition, just to name a few. Providers continually implement into their programs what they have learned as well as share their knowledge with other providers.

Network leaders will continue to survey providers about their computer needs and explore the possibilities of offering trainings in the future to meet their computer needs. Please let leaders know what kind of computer trainings, help or support you might need.

INFANT and TODDLER CURRICULUM NETWORK

The purpose of this Network is to support the needs and challenges of working with infants and toddlers as well as provide support for developing high quality infant/toddler curriculum. The Infant/Toddler Curriculum Support Network wrapped up the year by receiving program incentives. Providers who regularly attended the Network received eight books on learning, curriculum, nature and activities and ideas. They also received puppets for the *Little Red Hen* book which included a life size hen and two chicks as well as a dog, cat and pig hand puppets. They received a story enhancement set for *Mouse Paint* which included a big book version of the story. Providers also received a basket tote to carry their goodies home in. We had delicious snacks to help celebrate and spent time reflecting on what we had learned throughout the year.

The Infant/Toddler Curriculum Support Network continues into 2014 with specific themes for each monthly meeting. Themes for this year are:

- January . winter
- February - stories, literature, books
- March . break
- April . using observation and documentation to strengthen families
- May . gardening, spring
- June . summer
- July . holiday celebrations (for December curriculum)
- August . break (or individuals work on different curriculum themes)
- September . fall
- October . cooking, nutrition
- November . wrap up and discuss next year's topics

The format of the Network is to reflect on the previous month's curriculum as it applied to our programs and share what we did and how it worked. We make maps/webs with the topic as the center and the learning areas as the branches to activities. We brainstorm ideas and activities with the whole group and take home a resource list to work on in our programs. In addition to topic discussions the Network offers support for any challenges or issues providers might be having in their program.

TRAVELING NETWORK

The Network leaders are offering to come to your town and have a Network meeting to get local providers together who can't get to the other meetings. We are looking for providers who are willing to host a meeting in their home or find a local place to host a meeting. The hostess will also be asked to contact providers in their area and invite them to the local Network gathering. A hostess gift, refreshments and a discussion topic will be provided by the Network leaders. Please contact Gerri Barrows - 453-3707, or Michelle Sherwin - 623-6476, if you are interested.

Please join us for a Network meeting...

STARTING POINTS NETWORK SCHEDULE

Bristol/New Haven/Middlebury/Vergennes Network: 2nd Monday of the month at 6:30 PM. Provider Leaders: Gerri Barrows 453-3707 and Michelle Sherwin 623-6476
Meets at Discovery Hill Child Care in New Haven

Orwell Network: 3rd Monday of the month at 6:30
Meets at the home of Muffy Kashkin-Grollier: 948-2561 or muffyvjkg@yahoo.com

Addison County Directors' Network: 2nd Wed. of the month - 3:30- 5 PM - P/CC
Coordinator: Sue White, Quarry Hill School - 388-7297 or quarryhillschool@gmail.com

Brandon: Last Thursday of the month at 6:30 PM @ the Brandon Fire Department
Provider Leader: Tracy Bruce 247-5427 Call for details

***All Child Care Providers (Home and Center)
are invited to Starting Points Network meetings.
Network meetings offer time to share the challenges and joys
of providing early care and education with others who truly understand.
Each group is free to pursue its own definition of support.***

Newcomers are always welcome!

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(CDD) of the Agency of Human Services (AHS)*