

# ***Bristol Early Childhood Alliance***

## Zoom Meeting Notes

February 2, 2022 (11:00 – 12:00 p.m.)

**In attendance:** Maegan Adams, Maureen Eaton, Cecelia Garay, Sandra Godin, Andrew Howe, Kate Kerchaert, Tracy Krasinski, Lauren Kittle, Donna Koser, Dawn Leger, Kristen Peck, Mary Alice Petrucelli-Timek, Karen Lombardi, Donna Osuch, Heather Pease, Valerie Pelletier, Dimytra Phen (UW Intern), Jenn St. John and Rachael Witkewicz

Members were invited to introduce themselves.

Live Discussion with Kristen & Racheal on current mental health status of Bristol preschoolers. It's not bad – it's just different! A few key points follow:

- There has been an increase in separation problems in preschool. This could be due to the break in “normal” routines (COVID shutdown) that children have experienced. For many, simple things (such as keeping socks & shoes on at school) are hard to adjust to after being home for weeks, months or even years.
- Teachers need to be patient and lower their expectation of children. For many, preschool/Kindergarten is a brand new experience. The state has not lowered standards, however, they should consider it for a few more years. Young children are behind in their experiences due to COVID and only time can help them reach benchmarks/standards.

Note: Middle School and High School are also reporting negative behaviors that have resulted since the pandemic.

- Teachers need to understand that they also have been through a lot since the onset of the global pandemic. We need to help our teachers cope and manage as well.
- Masks have not impacted children and their behaviors and children have not complained in preschool. Masks have impacted language development/understanding of concepts, and teachers should put a focus on making sure they are taking measures to address this. School Readiness programs are hopeful that an amplifier for each classroom will help.
- Many children have been at home, with families who are working virtually. Children have not had interactions with other adults, had to wait their turn, followed routines, etc. Children will build skills needed for success, but they need more practice.
- We need a change in Mindset, Patience/Tolerance as skills are being built, more discreet teaching for parents with children (many parents are at a loss). Some parents feel like their child's struggle is their fault while others feel like it should be fixed by the teacher/program.

What Can Bristol Do?

1. UW has received grant funding to help providers regionally. Since this is not a “Bristol Only” problem, perhaps another topic/event can help.
2. Transition to K will consider a “Dine & Discuss” to help.
3. Utilize SEL tools being used in the schools and branch out into the community with monthly character skills being addressed across agencies/partners.
4. Be kind to one another and offer grace. Bristol is ALL Heart!



Maureen shared the diagram (to the left) to help put things into perspective. Babies born during the pandemic have no idea what it was like before Covid. Zero experience.

**Collaborating Grants:**

1. ARPA: Mary-Alice mentioned that the ARPA application has been submitted for workforce development that will include the Early Childhood Workforce.
2. MSCF: Main Street Community Foundation General Grant Cycle opened February 1st. Deadline to apply is March 25th. School Readiness will put in an application for amplifiers to assist SR programs address the delay in language development due to masks. Others can find the applications and guidelines at the following at <https://www.mainstreetfoundation.org/apply-for-grant>. Be sure to call Kate Kerchaert before starting an application for a preliminary discussion:

**Re-invent, re-imagine-re-vitalize:** The Outreach committee continues to work on making the “Making Bristol Better” website user friendly for parents. An Instagram account might be in place by the summer with possible TikToc content being developed. Information on BECA/SR is being distributed through the Knitting project and others.

**Subcommittees: Meeting notes to be sent.**

**Community Sharing:**

Donna requested all information be sent to [dkoser@uwwestcentralct.org](mailto:dkoser@uwwestcentralct.org) to be shared.

**Next Meeting: March 2, 2022 (Zoom)**