



Great Start Collaborative Parent Coalition Minutes
February 15, 2008
Transitions Center
9:15 a.m. to 11:15 a.m.

Members Present: Toinette Ingram, Whitney Haron, Cherie Ross-Barber, Maureen Cieszlak, Sarah Byam, Julie Kozan, Lula Haynes, Ruth Ruby, Dalia Smith

- I. Welcome and Congrats to Julie
- II. The PC's Role and Importance
 - Suzanne Greenberg spoke on the importance of the Parent Coalition. Key points were:
 1. Bringing your own perspective as a parent.
 2. Networking in the community – let other members of the community know what you're doing within the Parent Coalition.
 3. Do not hesitate to ask questions at the GSC Board Meetings.
- III. School Readiness/Communicating Effectively with the Media/New timesheets, child care reimbursement forms, and yearly planners.
 - L. Haynes will bring copies of what she received during the School Readiness training/conference on December 5, 2007 to the February meeting.
 - M. Cieszlak attended a training on Communicating Effectively with the Media in January. She learned how to better access all the great media resources we have in Saginaw County.
- IV. World Fare Discussion
 - A. How can we get others involved in our Coalition?**
 - Incentives.
 - Info at therapists, psychiatrists offices.
 - Brochures.
 - Church bulletins.
 - Child care.
 - Work with other parent groups that are already established.
 - Need to involve grandparents, dads, extended family.
 - 211 informed trauma community.
 - Family magazine: they have an ad for GSC, can we add PC?
 - Word of mouth, attending PAC meetings, PTO meetings, etc.
 - Boys and Girls Club, Big Brothers, Big Sisters, First Ward Community Center.

- Through Fliers/brochures sent home through schools with students.
- Service coordinators recruit parents.
- Focus groups.
- Support person.
- Movement toward a goal, have roles/jobs for parents to do (parents need to feel useful/needed when they volunteer).
- Offer parent trainings.
- Put brochures at libraries, schools, Chuck E Cheeses, YMCA, Mops (Mothers of Preschoolers), Pediatricians offices.
- Make people feel welcome and comfortable.
- Create outreach to community/parents.
- Word of mouth.
- Meetings at schools with child care.
- Through our jobs.
- Local businesses, Meijer, Walmart, etc.
- After school activities, spread the word.

B. How do we best describe our Coalition?

- Motivating the parents of the community.
- Strong leaders.
- Diverse group.
- Represent 4 different subcommittees of the GSC.
- Accepting of new ideas.
- Still evolving.
- Group that works to make a change.
- Strong willed: pick up what others lack, complement each other.
- Variety of backgrounds, experiences and agency involvement.
- Advocates.
- Want to be involved.
- Good relationship with the GSC board.
- Parents that want to be informed about up to date info by collaborating with a bigger body of people.
- Need more diversity (men, volunteers, grandparents).
- Want to be a source of information.
- Not afraid to challenge the “systems.”
- Children’s voice.
- Parent’s voice such as teen moms, older parents, other relatives.
- Outreach group to reach community.
- Pass on ideas.
- Serve as a voice for the most at risk population who are afraid of stigma and not as open to “agency”reps becoming involved in their families.

C. How do you see our Coalition helping the GSC to assist with the strategic Plan?

- Expanding our Parent Coalition.

- Reach other counties by collaboration.
- Help with updating resources.
- Parent's voice.
- Preschool info: packets with what is offered, rating system.
- Being active/proactive.
- Every child regardless of school should be equally educated.
- Same opportunities from district to district.
- Keep passing what you learn on to others.
- Getting involvement from other committed parents.
- Share every idea.
- Peer/parent support group and info call in line.
- Working closely with subcommittees and having influence with major decisions.
- Have a 'mentor' agency leader paired with each PC member/leader.
- Set involvement, faith based business and other underutilized community agencies.

D. What do you want to learn with regards to leadership and advocacy?

- Every person should be able to represent what the Coalition stands for and the GSC is.
- Learn how to not take no for an answer.
- Who are our leaders and ways to connect with them? (government, county, city, etc.)
- Effectively communicate with schools and other state/federal agencies in charge of early intervention/child welfare.
- Learn how to pass ideas on in a positive manner.
- The best way to advocate.
- How do we get more people involved?
- Learn where to start with chain of command.
- Everything, anything.
- We need to be good leaders in order to set the precedent for the ones to come.
- Inequality of healthcare distribution.
- Effective/positive engagement with legislators.
- Learn to make a financial change.
- Learn more about grants (qualifications) and budgets.

E. What are the challenges/needs that face parents in Saginaw County?

- Budget cuts in Saginaw County.
- Lack of state budget.
- People are afraid to ask questions.
- Shelter.
- Agency reps: do not judge me by how my house looks because you are not perfect either.
- Clothing.
- High crime rate.

- More parenting classes.
- Transportation.
- Safehouse.
- Daycare.
- Increase in health scares, MRSA, Autism, Diabetes.
- Support group.
- Agency reps be more mindful of and respect cultural differences and the uniqueness of families, what may “be normal” for you may not “be normal” for me.
- Following children past age 5.
- Access to resources.
- Uninformed.
- Parents don’t feel like their voice is heard.
- Bring more jobs to community, improve unemployment to increase tax revenue.
- High unemployment rate.
- Having the correct supplies for school and healthcare.
- Cost of living is high.
- After school programs.
- Financial security, assistance needed for classes to improve living, less help now with utility bills.
- Safety, crime rate.
- Overcrowding of classrooms.
- Health care/Insurance.
- Mental health access.
- Write to government or local public official and never get a response.
- Reading programs for parents and kids without stigma.
- Parents are stretched too thin.
- Summer programs, affordable summer camps, activities that expose kids to real world experiences (movies, restaurants, bank accounts, library, etc.).
- We need mentors for our kids, how about starting a mentor program that pairs agency leaders with youth in our community.
- Increase special education graduation rates.

F. Ground Rules for Parent Coalition Meetings

- Be on time or call if you are going to be late or can’t make it.
- Put cell phones on vibrate.
- Be committed.
- No side conversations.
- Be respectful.
- Come prepared.
- Want to learn.
- Active participation.
- Ask questions: “The only dumb questions are those that go unasked.”

V. Mission/Vision Statement

- The group worked well in coming up with a Mission Statement for the Parent Coalition. **The Mission is: An organization of powerful parents that works to give the community a voice to advocate for the needs of all families in Saginaw County.**
- **The Vision is: All families in Saginaw are equipped with the tools and knowledge to ensure success in school and life.”**

VI. Action Plan for 2008

- February 2008 – Parent Coalition Meeting duties: finalize Mission, talk about brochure, Eco Map.
- March 2008 – Bring a friend/evening at Claytor Elementary. Food and child care can be provided. Have two parents from the Coalition speak about their experiences. Have incentives for coming. Invite Glecia Wright from MSUE to come and bring “Sidney.”
- April 2008 – ECIC training – “Talking to Legislators and Elected Officials.” S. Byam will email C. Ross-Barber to secure the date of April 28 for this training.
- May 2008 – Star Power Rally. Bus will be leaving at 7 a.m. and returning around 4 p.m.
- June 2008 – Community Outreach project. Each person on the Coalition will select an agency that has strong parent involvement within Saginaw County and will visit that agency’s Director to find out how we can better connect.
- July 2008 – No meetings.
- August 2008 – Training on “Effective Communication with the Media.” Possibly hold this meeting at Claytor Elementary during the evening. S. Byam will secure a date with C. Ross-Barber by June.
- September 2008 – We need to address the Strategic Plan goals this month. The idea of having a fun day in a local park was suggested. Children would come to the event and possibly have parent/child activities, etc.

VII. Dinner to welcome Julie

- Everyone is going to check their calendars to see if May 15th at 5 p.m. works. We need to contact Old Country Buffet and Fire Mountain regarding reservations/space.

VIII. Child care/Meeting time

- Everyone seemed open to the idea of having a couple of Parent Coalition meetings a year at the Claytor Elementary location during the evening.

IX. Adjournment

*Next GSC Meeting
Monday, February 25, 2008 at the Transitions Center 9:00 a.m.
Parent Coalition meeting will follow*