

WINDSOR'S PLAN

THRIVING CHILDREN THRIVING COMMUNITY

JUNE 2009

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Windsor's Community Vision:

All Windsor children ages **birth** through eight will **come to school** ready, willing and **able to succeed** as **caring, capable and confident** learners.

The Town of Windsor enjoys a rich history, and one of being first: the first town in Connecticut, and first for its citizens. This tradition of being first continues as Windsor becomes one of 23 communities throughout the state to be among the first to develop community plans for improving its youngest residents' readiness for school and ultimately life.

In 2001, Windsor formed the Early Childhood Council (ECC) whose mission is to advocate for and support quality early childhood experiences that enable Windsor's children to grow, develop and learn to their fullest potential. More recently, four local agencies (Windsor Family Resource Centers, Windsor School Readiness Council, Windsor Health Department, and ECC) came together as conveners to spearhead a grassroots community planning effort. This plan is the final product of the planning phase of the project.

We have gathered information on how well Windsor is doing in raising children that come to school ready, willing and able to succeed as caring, capable and confident learners. This plan reflects our understanding of the "story behind the data" learned through community meetings, a survey, interviews and focus groups with many Windsor residents and families. We fully expect that we will learn more as the project evolves and adjust our plan accordingly.

Being ready for school takes thoughtful partnership and creative thinking to leverage the resources we already have to do more and do it better. The Thriving Children, Thriving Community (TC2) project set out to jump start that process. Our first product is a community agenda for early childhood here in Windsor. This community agenda will serve as a guide to the whole town as we set out to give Windsor children the greatest chance for success, both in school and in life.

Windsor is a thriving community! There are many signs of positive change over the past decade:

- Business is booming in Windsor as many large employers invest in new locations here.
- Windsor's schools boast small classes – the average Kindergarten class is just 15 students and grade 2 class size averages 18.¹
- Windsor expanded its services to families with the addition of Family Resource Centers in the kindergarten and each elementary school.
- Preschool attendance is on the rise – 82% of Windsor children entered Kindergarten with some preschool experience.²
- Windsor is a vibrant, diverse community that offers many family activities and events year round – there is a lot to do in Windsor!
- Windsor is a safe community with excellent outdoor spaces – Windsor has the lowest violent crime rate of any suburb bordering Hartford including Bloomfield, East Hartford, West Hartford and Wethersfield. In addition, Windsor has less than 2% of the violent crime found in the city of Hartford.³

Still, many young Windsor children and their families face significant challenges. Research shows us that early childhood investments reap huge benefits in life outcomes. Being ready for school by five and succeeding in school by nine requires a safe, healthy home, positive relationships with family and friends, learning opportunities, and a sense of hope.

There are five key areas where Windsor’s Early Childhood Council (ECC) and the community can work together to close important gaps:

1. Early Wellness
2. School Readiness
3. Early School Success
4. Emotional Well-being and Safety
5. Physical Health

For each of these areas, this plan aims to sustain where Windsor excels while closing important gaps in each of these areas. As we work together to close these gaps, we need to preserve the unique and broad range of people and programs available in Windsor. Much can be gained through communication, coordination and connections.

Please note, if you are looking specifically to find information in a format and language consistent with Results Based Accountability Framework (RBA), please see **Appendix H** for the RBA Schematic which will provide you with a high-level visual outline of the entire plan including headline and secondary indicators.

Early Wellness

There are two important early wellness gaps to close:

1. Windsor’s youngest and poorest children are not getting regular check-ups⁴
2. Windsor mothers are less likely to get prenatal care and more likely to deliver a low birth-weight baby than other Connecticut mothers.⁵ Low birth weight babies are at higher risk for health conditions and special needs.⁶

Through partnership with Windsor Social Services, Windsor Health Department, local doctors, the Birth-to-three program, Head Start, the Women Infant and Children (WIC) program, and the regional Help Me Grow program, the ECC and the community will **provide early care and intervention for expectant mothers and parents with young children** by:

- Removing barriers to prenatal care and check-ups
- Supporting mothers in having a healthy pregnancy
- Making sure children ages 0-3 are checked for healthy development.

School Readiness

While most Windsor children go to preschool, there are still three important school readiness gaps to close:

1. Less than half (42%) of Kindergarteners come to school fully ready.⁷
2. Windsor sees a racial achievement gap similar to the rest of the state (twice as many White Kindergarteners come to school fully ready compared with non-White students).⁸

3. Affordable, high quality preschool experiences are not universally available to Windsor families.

Through partnership with preschools, daycares, informal caregivers, Kindergarten programs, Family Resource Centers, the faith community, parents and guardians, the ECC and the community will **increase access to affordable preschool** by:

- Providing community-funded preschool scholarships
- Informing families about available preschool spaces

Early School Success

Windsor's classrooms are diverse:

- 67% of students K-12 are non-white⁹
- 11% of Windsor's public school students have special needs, 71% of whom are male.
- Among special needs students, 17% have an emotional disturbance or attention deficit disorder/attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADD/ADHD)¹⁰
- 6% of Windsor students come from a home where the language spoken most often is not English.¹¹

There are four important early school success gaps to close:

1. Non-white third graders in Windsor score considerably lower than their White peers on the Connecticut Mastery Test (CMT); annual trends are not improving.¹²
2. Lower income children in Windsor, regardless of race, score lower than their peers on the CMT.¹³
3. Reading scores are lower than math scores.¹⁴
4. Nearly one in four Windsor babies are born to mothers with less than or equal to a High School diploma. Research shows that when mothers are more educated, their children do better in school.¹⁵

Through partnership with educators, parents, caregivers, the library, the adult education program, Windsor Social Services, the Parent Leadership Training Institute, Family Resource Centers, local businesses, the faith community, the ECC and the community will **increase family literacy** by:

- Increasing family participation in language and literacy activities
- Increase parent attendance at General Education Degree (GED) and English as a Second Language (ESL) classes
- Expand home visit programs to all Windsor families to improve reading and language skills

Emotional Well-being and Safety

There are three important emotional well-being and safety gaps to close:

1. Behavioral issues occur even in elementary school classrooms such that in the past two years 5% of K-3 students were suspended.¹⁶
2. Data shows that Windsor families face many stressors and challenges including unemployment, single parenthood, depression, being an English Language Learner, domestic and child abuse.
3. Some Windsor neighborhoods lack sidewalks for safe routes to school and general use.¹⁷

Through partnership with schools, parents, caregivers, the adult education program, Windsor Parks & Recreation Department, the Parent Leadership Training Institute, Community Health Services, Department of Social Services, Department of Children and Families, Windsor Police, Family Resource Centers, real estate agents, the faith community, the ECC and the community will **increase family supports** through:

- Developing information centers/hubs to help families, caregivers and providers find the resources they need
- Reaching out to families with early childhood resources
- Increasing family and community events that reflect Windsor's cultural diversity
- Implementing stress reduction programs in schools

Physical Health

Windsor's children face many health issues in and out of the classroom:

- One in four Connecticut children are obese or overweight¹⁸
- 15% of Windsor public school students have asthma¹⁹
- Allergies among Windsor students are rapidly on the rise

There are two important physical health gaps to close:

1. Only 21% of Windsor's fourth graders pass all four Connecticut fitness tests compared with 36% statewide. Within town, there is a sizeable gap between Windsor's top performing and bottom performing schools.²⁰
2. Access to dental care in Windsor is low especially for low income families: only two of 13 Windsor dentists accept HUSKY insurance.²¹ Of those Windsor children enrolled in HUSKY, only half of kids ages 3-5 visit a dentist annually, and nearly a third of kids ages 6-8 visit a dentist less than once a year.²²

Through partnership with parents, caregivers, Windsor Health Department, Windsor Parks & Recreation Department, local doctors and dentists, school nurses and physical education teachers, Family Resource Centers, local businesses and the faith community, the ECC and the community will **improve family health and wellness** by:

- Improving access to dental care
- Connecting families with health and wellness information in new ways
- Connecting doctors to local health and wellness resources including fitness, recreation, behavioral health providers and support groups
- Supporting families in making healthy lifestyle changes

Call to Action

As Windsor continues its journey of improving the wellbeing of its youngest citizens, this Community Agenda for Early Childhood will provide a framework for ongoing progress, measurement, and improvement. But who will make all these important changes happen? No agency or person can do it alone– it will take the energy, creativity and will power of us all. The Early Childhood Council will be the hub while schools, health care providers, community service agencies, volunteer groups, town departments, community leaders, faith communities, parents, and families must all work together to make the vision a reality.

What the ECC is currently doing:

The ECC helped create this plan and has agreed to serve as the steward or manager of this work moving forward. In view of its role, the ECC is changing its by-laws to better support the community agenda and provide the structure needed to support the community work. Meetings and workgroups will be coordinated by the ECC to allow residents and community partners to periodically review Windsor’s progress and adjust the plan along the way.

Windsor’s children and families need you to:

1. Share your story. Help us understand what works well and what still can be better. Contact the ECC Coordinator at ecc@windsorecc.org.
2. Spread the word. Tell your family, friends and neighbors about this plan. The more residents that help shape the agenda, the better.
3. Get involved. Life is busy. There are all kinds of ways you can help out even if you only have an hour to give:
 - Attend a town meeting where children’s issues are discussed.
 - Share ECC event flyers with your friends and neighbors.
 - Join an ECC workgroup to help bring life to this plan.
 - Write your legislator in support of children’s issues.
 - Arrange for your church or mosque to host an event.
 - Add a link from your agency’s website to the ECC’s website.
 - Help write a grant to bring more resources into Windsor for young children.
 - Work for an hour at an ECC information booth at one of Windsor’s local events.
 - Support children’s programs and activities.
 - Help connect our partners to others in the community who have resources or programs with similar goals for kids.
4. Read with your child – just 15 minutes a day beginning at birth makes a world of difference in your child’s success in school and life.
5. Talk with your child’s teachers.
6. Explore a local park or bike trail with your child.
7. Look in your mailbox for your free copy of “There’s a Lot to Do in Windsor.”
8. Tell us if you cannot find the answers you need to help your child grow and learn.

Windsor’s future lies in our children – when they succeed, the community succeeds, too. Together, we can build a stronger community where every child has the chance to thrive in Windsor.

PROJECT PARTICIPANTS

**This plan lives because of the passion, commitment and interest of a large group of volunteers.
Thank you for your contributions over the past 18 months!**

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 Joan Whitten
 Nina Whyte
 Karen Zebrowski = CM

<p>CC = Committee Chair CM = Committee Member CV = Convening Member of TC2 LWG = Leadership Work Group ECC EX = ECC Executive Team ECC = ECC member</p>
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ENDNOTES

Executive Summary

¹ *Strategic School Profile 2007-08, Elementary School K-3 Edition, Roger Wolcott Early Childhood Center, Windsor School District*. Rep. Connecticut Department of Education, n.d. Web. <<http://www.csde.state.ct.us/public/der/ssp/SCH0708/elemb053.pdf>>.

² *Strategic School Profile 2007-08, Elementary School K-3 Edition, Roger Wolcott Early Childhood Center, Windsor School District*. Rep. Connecticut Department of Education, n.d. Web. <<http://www.csde.state.ct.us/public/der/ssp/SCH0708/elemb053.pdf>>.

³ Searles, Kevin. "Positive Safety Fact." E-mail to the author. 18 June 2009.

⁴ "HUSKY and Birth Data." *Discovery 2009: Community Data Sets*. Connecticut Department of Health (DPH) & William Caspar Graustein Memorial Fund, n.d. Web. 18 June 2009. <http://www.discovery.wcgmf.org/category_304.html>.

⁵ Vital Statistics Registration Report: Table 4. Rep. 2006. Connecticut Department of Health (DPH). <<http://www.ct.gov/dph/cwp/view.asp?a=3132&q=394598>>.

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⁷ Kirschner-Robinson, Susan, and Susan Jaafar. *Status of Windsor preschool education and programs, Early Care & Education Committee Report*. Working paper. November, 22 2008.

⁸ *The Achievement Gap*. Issue brief. ConnCan, 1 Nov. 2006. Web. Spring 2009. <http://www.conncan.org/matriarch/MultiPiecePage.asp_Q_PageID_E_79_A_PageName_E_IssueBrief1>

⁹ *Strategic School Profile 2007-08, Windsor School District*. Rep. Connecticut Department of Education, n.d. Web. June 2009. <<http://www.csde.state.ct.us/public/der/ssp/dist0708/dist113.pdf>>.

¹⁰ *Active Students w/Disabilities receiving Education and Related Services: District 164 - Windsor*. Hartford: Connecticut State Department of Education, April, 7 2008.

¹¹ *Strategic School Profile 2007-08, Windsor School District*. Rep. Connecticut Department of Education, n.d. Web. June 2009. <<http://www.csde.state.ct.us/public/der/ssp/dist0708/dist113.pdf>>.

¹² *Data Interaction for Connecticut Mastery Test, 4th Generation*. Web. Spring 2009. <<https://solutions1.emetric.net/cmtpublic/index.aspx>>.

¹³ *Data Interaction for Connecticut Mastery Test, 4th Generation*. Web. Spring 2009. <<https://solutions1.emetric.net/cmtpublic/index.aspx>>.

¹⁴ *Data Interaction for Connecticut Mastery Test, 4th Generation*. Web. Spring 2009. <<https://solutions1.emetric.net/cmtpublic/index.aspx>>.

¹⁵ Walston, Jill, Amy Rathbun, and Elvira Hausken. *Eighth Grade: First findings from the final round of the early childhood longitudinal study, Kindergarten class of 1998-99 (ECLS-K)*. Rep. US Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics (ies), Sept. 2008. Web. <<http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2008/2008088.pdf>>.

¹⁶ Suspension Data available through the William Caspar Graustein Memorial Fund website at http://www.discovery.wcgmf.org/category_311.html and through records of the Windsor Public Schools

¹⁷ Good, Lauren. "Windsor Sidewalks & GIS Technology." 16 Dec. 2008. E-mail.

¹⁸ Get Moving Connecticut: A CCM/COC Childhood Obesity Initiative, October 2006

¹⁹ *Asthma Reporting Form*. Windsor: n.p., 2007-2008 School Year. Print.

²⁰ *Strategic School Profiles by School 2003-07, Elementary School K-6 Edition, Windsor School District*. Rep. Connecticut Department of Education, n.d. Web. <<http://www.csde.state.ct.us/public/cedar/profiles/index.htm#go>>.

²¹ Schulz, Allyson. TC2 Health Committee Report: Oral Health - Windsor Dentists. 6 Oct. 2008. Raw data. Windsor.

²² *Connecticut Department of Health: HUSKY Dental Care Utilization*. Rep. William Caspar Graustein Memorial Fund, Spring 2009. Web. <http://www.discovery.wcgmf.org/category_304.html>.