

## Great Start Parent Coalition

### EARLY EDUCATION

Members in attendance: David Bull, Director of Head Start  
David Pray, Superintendent, Clinton Schools  
Kathy Burke, Professor of Early Childhood Education, SHU  
Pam Esterline, Director of the Montessori Children's House  
Rachel Hague, Madison 4- Year Old Program  
Holly Bella, Kindergarten Teacher, Morenci Elementary School  
Cynthia Opelt, Retired Elementary Principal

October 6, 2009, 12:00- 2:00 pm, Adrian College Boardroom

Members of the Early Care and Education subcommittee met to discuss two objectives:

1. Expand playgroup opportunities throughout the county.
2. Increase the capacity of at-risk preschool programs

Initially the group met and introduced several new members to the committee which involved discussing and reiterating much of the focus and many of the initiatives of the committee and the coalition at large. This was helpful in sorting through some of the details and establishing the parameters of existing programs as follows:

Head Start is a federally funded program for 3 and 4 year old children.

Great Start is a state funded program for students entering kindergarten next year.

Lenawee Play Groups are throughout the county for children birth to 5 years old.

There are existing Playgroups currently in Tecumseh, Madison and Britton and the Lenawee Intermediate School District. They are coordinated by a "teacher leader" and instructed by "parent educators." Playgroups were initiated throughout the county with seed money for funding, in particular through the Intermediate School District, with the intent that each school district would ultimately assume the responsibility for continued programming and funding.

There are always more children waiting to enter playgroups than there are openings available. 51% of the family participating in the playground must qualify within the State guidelines for "free and reduced lunch." The program cost" \$3,400 per student for a half day, \$6,800 for a full day. Families pay for the program on a "sliding scale" based on income. 81% of the budget for the program is for staff salaries and benefits. The programs are basically FREE to the parents except for the field trips.

\*The primary issue for establishing more playgroups is funding.

Possible ways to expand playgroup Opportunities throughout the county:

***Coordination of space in existing playgroup areas.*** Ex. If a program is operational on Tuesdays and Thursday use that same space on Monday and Wednesday for another playgroup.

***Document the results of existing Playgroup programs.*** Ex. Currently we were told that in Tecumseh, fewer students are certified for special education programs as a result of a better start with more support prior to entering kindergarten.

***More transportation is needed for children to Playgroups.*** Ex. Children need to get out of the house and participate in the playgroup but parents can not ride the busses because of liability and younger children riding busses alone need special services with seating and adult monitors. They can not ride busses with older children already attending school. Many parents will not drive to attend the playgroup with their child.

***Research additional sources of funding.*** Ex. “Traditional” sources of funding for the school based programs are not available because of the economy. We need to look “outside” what has been done in the past.