

West Haven mayor, school superintendent recognize early childhood educators

WEST HAVEN (May 24, 2013) – School readiness activities continued in West Haven including a local citation from the mayor and school superintendent recently presented to local pre-school teachers and educators as part of the city’s “Month of the Young Child” celebration in May.

Improving the levels of school readiness for 3- and 4-year-old children has been identified as an important strategy in increasing student performance throughout a child’s time in school.

The state departments of Education and Social Services have been implementing a Connecticut School Readiness and Child Day Care grant program since 1997 that facilitates 3- and 4-year-old children to participate in a high-quality preschool and child care experience in 65 qualifying towns including West Haven.

In its 2012 report “A Report of School Readiness Need,” the state presented a summary of the needs and responsibilities as reported by the local School Readiness Councils.

Findings for West Haven included:

- Based on 2011 census data, 1,317 children in West Haven were identified as pre-school age (3- and 4-year-olds)
- Pre-school center-based capacity in West Haven in 2010 was 916 slots
- Pre-school center-based capacity in West Haven in 2011 rose to 1,095 slots, representing a one-year increase of 179 slots
- An estimated 222 pre-school aged children were not being served by any program
- After factoring in a 20% “opt-out” rate, the “unmet” need in West Haven was estimated at 178 children

A significant piece in the local effort to increase student outcomes is to get the word out that school readiness programs exist in order to increase overall participation and enrollment in qualified programs, according to West Haven Schools Pre-school Supervisor Judith Antignani.

Antignani develops and manages the Early Childhood Council to engage families, schools and the community in improving developmental and educational outcomes for young children. She also oversees 10 pre-school teachers serving 124 students in eight preschools within six city elementary schools and is also responsible for the School Readiness Grant that gives 248 preschool-age children in West Haven access to the five, community-based sites.

The five community based programs are operated by the West Haven Community House with its Head Start program, the West Haven Child Development Center, Tutor Time, Kids Club Learning Center and East Shore.

As part of the recognition effort, Mayor John Picard and Supt. of Schools Neil Cavallaro signed a card “To our West Haven School Readiness Teachers” that read:

“Preschool teachers make learning an adventure. Preschool teachers make every moment a learning moment. Preschool teachers instill the joy of learning in the very young to be carried with them into the future. Preschool teachers plant the seeds to be nurtured and cultivated into a lifetime of learning. Thank you for being that special teacher who instills the pleasure and joy of learning in our earliest students.”

Each teacher also received a special bag of items including books and related items.

In addition, the mayor’s office issued a proclamation this month praising educators and declaring May the “Month of the Young Child” that said in part “it is important that we not only love our children but that we provide high-quality early childhood experiences necessary to promote their optimal health, safety growth and development.

“In the city of West Haven, I urge all residents to join with me in supporting the needs of young children in our community,” Picard said.

For more information about school readiness, contact Antignani at the West Haven Board of Education, School Readiness office at 931-6836.

For more information about this release, please contact Development and Communications Director Chris Carroll at the West Haven Community House at (203) 934-5221, ext. 133.