

Arkansas 21C COORDINATOR AND IMPLEMENTATION STAFF
NETWORK MEETING
MAY 5, 2003

SUMMARY

Introductions: each district introduced attending staff and mentioned either a strength that they could offer as mentors to others in 21C or a need that they had that might be met by other districts. The following were offered:

- *Augusta:* issues are dealt with immediately and not put on hold
- *Yellville:* provides a comprehensive program on campus for birth to five, with parental involvement and advisory board.
- *Batesville:* offers many programs including preschool and after-school, but a special feature is the child care resource center that is a collaborative effort.
- *Rogers:* looks at the family as a whole to help provide whatever services are needed.
- *Paragould:* responds to fit the needs of the community and has strong backing of the administration; they are looking into moving the 4 yo program into the elementary school, which will provide more space for birth to 3 yo.
- *Hamburg:* has a strong after-school program, but overall, they try to meet all the needs that parents have for children
- *Van Buren/King Elementary:* PAT is in its ninth year, and the preschool is in its second but the strength is its location in the elementary school and that the principal is the 21C director.
- *Newark:* has the support of the administration and the school board and will be opening a new FRC in a refurbished building.
- *Fort Smith:* as a new program, would like to know what gets teachers excited about 21C
- *Emmet:* with significant early childhood experience, they would like to have new ideas for parent involvement.
- *Cabot:* how to sell 21C to the community and increase parent involvement
- *Fayetteville/Jefferson Elementary:* has a strong parental involvement program (Readifest) and are looking to expand their after-school program.
- *Paris:* because of its rural nature, the challenge is to reach out to parents with pre-school age children.
- *Plainview-Rover:* have a new infant/toddler program, with absolute support from the superintendent and principal.
- *Arkadelphia:* view their community collaboration as a strength, along with the excellent staff team work.
- *Omaha:* has great administrative support and good parental involvement.
- *Forrest City:* feels that their strength involves their networking with different community agencies and implementation of curriculum.

Attendees from the State/agencies include: Janie Huddleston, Kathy Stegall and Denise Maxam from DHR, Division of Early Childhood; Susan Underwood, Brazier Dene-Watts and Dee Cox from the Department of Education; and Ann Peterson from Head Start Collaborative.

Promoting High-quality Early Education: Dr. Bob Bradley, UALR gave an inspirational and informative session: see handouts.

AR Dept of Education and Division of Early Childhood: various staff members covered a number of items, including various bills that have passed or are being considered that relate to early childhood and education issues; they distributed a number of documents from NCLB, Family Connections, Frameworks, grants, and grant application; 21CCLC grants were discussed and the Family Literacy campaign was described. They also discussed kindergarten readiness plans and some plans for the upcoming year.

Networking Lunch: the group ate lunch with colleagues; there were two 21C coordinator tables, two Pre-school teachers, one for PAT, one for Principals, and one for School-Age Care staff.

Advocacy: Beth Lapin presented some ideas about advocacy, which broadened the definition to include education and various other ways to promote 21C. She described some guidelines related to visits to legislators and promoted the idea of writing letters to the editor and working with newspapers on editorials.

After-school programs: Norma Meek presented an engaging description of things to consider for after-school programs. She led the group through a memory exercise to stress the importance of the quality of programs. She described characteristics of staff and the importance of balancing among the strengths. She talked about curriculum, the importance of various centers, and she talked briefly about space needs.

Arkansas 21C Network: Beth Lapin talked about the future of the group, after the WRF grants ended and asked for suggestions. Involvement of classroom teachers in "ABC's of 21C" was discussed and it was decided that districts that wanted Beth to give a presentation during professional development would provide her with dates before the end of this school year and she would try some pilot presentations.

The group also discussed some 'housekeeping' issues, such as the next fall meeting, conference registration, and upcoming questionnaires. Barring any unforeseen circumstances, our current plan is to hold the next Arkansas 21C network meeting for 21C coordinators and implementation staff on October 21-22, 2003, at WinRock in Petit Jean; please save the dates.