



Town of Coventry

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OFFICE OF THE TOWN MANAGER
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March 2, 2015

TO: Co-chairs Sen. Beth Bye & Rep. Toni Walker and members of the Appropriations Committee

RE: Request to fund the Office of Early Childhood (OEC) School Readiness Funds

We understand that the Governor's proposed budget cuts the Office of Early Childhood (OEC) affecting School Readiness programs. In Coventry we have established a School Readiness program called the STEPS Collaborative which would be severely impacted. Currently our program receives between \$19,000 - \$21,000 in State funding each year from the OEC. These funds are matched by the William Caspar Graustein Memorial Fund. This match results in State dollars going even further! We understand without State funds the Graustein money is also threatened.

The Coventry Town Council urges legislators to consider HB 6004 which will require "... the Office of Early Childhood to collaborate with local early childhood collaboratives in the implementation of early care and education and child development programs at the local level and to ensure the continued allocation of State resources to local early childhood collaboratives that are currently in place."

Locally, Coventry prides itself on the emphasis that is placed on educating students in the community. This emphasis is seen in many ways, but one outstanding initiative is Coventry's Early Childhood Collaborative, STEPS, which seeks to ensure that all children, birth to age 8, are nurtured, healthy, engaged, and successful learners. STEPS' charge is to increase the community's awareness about the importance of quality preschool education, to strengthen the early-learning experiences for all Coventry children, and to offer resources and support to families as the first teachers of their children. In essence, STEPS is the foundation of all early-learning initiatives in Coventry and is the building block for future school success in the Coventry Public Schools. Many representatives from our public school system, including the Superintendent's office, building principals and teachers work closely with STEPS so that children will be able to arrive at the kindergarten door with the best early-learning experiences possible.

The Town Council has continually supported the early childhood initiatives of STEPS by redeploying our Youth Services staff to sustain the work of STEPS and supporting parenting education. Most recently STEPS has partnered with the district in developing our submission of the Smart Start grant. This particular partnership began last year when a Preschool Feasibility Committee was formed and the Coordinator of Coventry STEPS was asked to co-chair the committee. In addition, the school district looks forward to the possible development of a Family Resource Center.

The collaboration between the Town of Coventry, the Coventry Public Schools and STEPS has made a great impact on Coventry's youngest citizens. Please do not hesitate to contact me if I can provide further information.

Sincerely,

John A. Elsesser