

Marion County
Children and Families Commission

Our Mission

To bring together community efforts and resources to ensure an equal opportunity for all children and families in Marion County to attain their full potential.



DATE: July 9, 2020
TIME: 12:00 p.m. – 1:30 p.m.

Location: Virtual Zoom Meeting

- | | | | | |
|-----------|--------------|---|---------------------|----------------------------|
| | 11:55 | Log in | | |
| | 12:00 | Welcome | | Shaney Starr, Chair |
| 1. | 12:05 | Membership | | Shaney |
| | | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Melissa Glover has been appointed to the CFC | | |
| 2. | 12:10 | Approve May 21 Meeting Notes | Action | All |
| 3. | 12:15 | HOPE ALIVE – East Salem | | |
| | | a. Conversations with | Discussion | Shaney & All |
| | | <ul style="list-style-type: none">i. Michelle Halterii. David Woodiii. Tracy Moisan | | |
| | | b. Review Action Plan Draft | Presentation | Melinda Hautala |
| 4. | 1:15 | Next Steps | Action | Shaney & All |
| | 1:30 | Adjourn | | Shaney |

Meetings are recorded for the purpose of having a public record of the proceedings.

Next CFC meeting is scheduled for August 20, 2020

Marion County Children & Families Commission Meet to Learn, June 2020

Commission Members met informally with principals from three schools in East Salem:

Michelle Halter, Principal at Hayesville Elementary

David Wood, Principal at Stephens Middle School

Tracy Moisan, Principal at Scott Elementary

We asked each of them the following questions:

- What are the biggest challenges you see for kids and parents right now, and how are they different from before COVID-19?
- What do you see as short-term needs as opposed to long-term goals?
- What are your fears regarding district budget changes?
- What would you like school to be like when it starts back in the fall?
- What would you like people from other parts of town to know about this neighborhood?

COMMON THEMES:

- **Families need short-term help with basic needs like food and housing.**
- **Mental wellness during a time of extreme stress and loss of social connection is a critical challenge.**
- **Parents need support in every way, including help with schooling at home, help with coping skills, and help with obtaining services.**
- **Schools want to strengthen relationships with families and build trust.**
- **Issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion are more important than ever.**
- **The challenges of distance learning and COVID-related physical distancing will not be resolved when school resumes in the fall, and no one knows how long this reality will continue.**

Principal Michelle Halter

- It's a challenge to maintain connections with students and families, who tend to appreciate face-to-face contact.
- School staff has to go to families rather than expecting families to approach them.
- When kids are in school, faculty and staff can observe when kids need extra attention but it's harder to track this while kids are at home.
- Kids still need assistance with basic needs like food and clothing.

- School staff has been trying to talk to families to find out who will actually be comfortable sending their kids to school in the fall, even with the new format and extra precautions.
- In a way, it has been beneficial that educators have been forced to learn that you can do hard things.
- Distance learning has been surprisingly positive for a few reasons:
 - Some students do very well in this format, even better than traditional school in some cases.
 - Virtual meetings make it possible for faculty and staff who work different schedules to meet together, rather than having to schedule two separate meetings.
 - Virtual contact has allowed for more access and interaction with Superintendent Christy Perry.
- Families and other residents in the neighborhood want to be involved and feel like they're part of the community – they need advocates, not allies.
- Community meetings need to be available in Spanish as well as English
- Michelle has strengthened her resolve to make sure their work is mindful of cultural diversity in every way.
- She is particularly focusing on community engagement, including visiting families at their homes.
- She would love to see a series of regular community meetings so that there can be deeper ongoing conversations.
- She suggests a “social getaway” event would attract participants.
- She invites CFC members to join her with some of her meetings with parents and families.
- Families still want parenting classes as well as mental wellness support for themselves and their kids.

Principal David Wood

- Stephens does not have a well-established structure of parent participation, but they are finding ways to improve that.
- It is difficult for students and teachers to establish a relationship when kids are not coming to the classroom every day, and this will likely be even harder in the fall when students have new teachers, but this is one reason that they are working on strengthening family connections.
- David hopes that when kids come back to school in the fall, the school can focus on what they DID learn, rather than what they're missing, and go from there.
- He is working to make sure that Stephens affirms the skills that kids come into middle school with and helps better prepare them for programs that are available when they move on to McKay.
- David would like to collaborate with the other schools that feed into McKay, so that there is better “vertical” coordination; a foundation is built in elementary school, and all of the subsequent learning should build on that and lead into the next thing.
 - For example, Stephens did not previously have a Spanish teacher, despite the school population being about 67% Latinx/Hispanic.

- Without a Spanish program, the students at Stephens would not be ready to take advantage of the Heritage Spanish program at McKay, which would be a lost opportunity.
 - David strongly believes that “literacy is literacy” and the school should incorporate Spanish-based literacy in addition to English learning.
- David would like to see the school operate similarly to a community center, where things are going on that benefit the neighborhood, beyond just classes, but he finds that different entities have competing ideas on what the school’s purpose is.
 - He described how when he was at McKay, there was always a lot of activity outside school hours, which not only engaged students and families, but often attracted other members of the community as well.
 - SKEF provided a lot of after-school activities, like soccer programs, so it would be of value to have a conversation with the YMCA, since they are taking over SKEF operations.
 - Transportation is a bigger challenge for middle school students than it is for high school students. Stephens has a bus that gives kids a ride home from after-school programs, but they can’t really plan activities after 4:00 pm.
 - Insufficient bus service is also a problem for evening activities because even if a lot of families want to participate, there is nowhere near enough parking for everyone to drive there.
- David visited a neighborhood church in order to begin forming contacts with residents in the community, but this was just before the shutdown for COVID-19, so he’s not sure how this could progress going forward.
- The practical operational challenges of distance learning for kids and families have proven to be the main focus of their work, often overshadowing attempts to make community connections.
 - It did not work to just move the regular curriculum online, because even experienced educators like him found it overwhelming, so it was even more so for parents and kids.
 - They have had great success with increased mental health sessions—the virtual format helps some kids open up, and adults can observe and follow up with teachers and staff.
- David thinks the CFC could be instrumental in:
 - Helping to locate resources in convenient locations, including in the new facility near the Boys & Girls Club, in the school itself, and possibly in other innovative places; and
 - Helping to build connections between families and the schools, as well as between each other.
- He said that culturally, East Salem is very family-centered, with a natural penchant for collaborating. The challenge to find ways to encourage participation and make the process more inviting.

Principal Tracy Moisan

- Currently, families are facing a lot of the same challenges that they faced before COVID-19, but to a more intense degree.

- Many have lost employment and are facing housing loss—or families have already lost housing and are living with insufficient shelter (multiple families in small apartments, families staying in garages, etc)
 - Families need food assistance, but they do not know where to get it, or they have no transportation to get it. The school delivers food boxes to some families, as they can.
 - Parents have no access to child care for kids who would normally be in school during the daytime.
- Tracy worries that many families will not be ready to send kids to school in fall, even with new protocols.
- Scott has a large Pacific Islander community, and these families have been especially reluctant to leave their homes or allow their children to leave the home for any reason.
- There will still be an option for continued distance learning.
- Many of the challenges with distance learning, however, are practical operational obstacles:
 - One of the biggest distractions for kids is device screens, so it's difficult to expect kids to focus on school that requires interaction with a device.
 - There are often language barriers (13 different languages are spoken by Scott students).
 - Internet connectivity can be patchy or non-existent.
 - Parents work multiple jobs, including night shifts, meaning that they must sleep during the daytime when kids are doing school.
 - There may be multiple families living in overcrowded spaces, increasing the likelihood that there simply isn't anywhere for kids to focus on doing school (there may be adults sleeping in the living room during the day before going to night work, for example).
- Mental Health is one of the crisis issues right now—the school has offered counseling, but not many families are taking advantage of it.
- Tracy worries that when children are not at school, it is more difficult to see when kids need help.
- While the loss of the Student Success funding is disappointing, Tracy does not see that as having much impact on her work going forward, because they are basically back to where they were before.
- Before COVID-19, the school was already planning on doing outreach to parents and families, to try and increase their involvement.
 - In addition to the above-stated cultural and language barriers, many families in this community are migrant workers and some are undocumented, so they fear anyone coming to their homes who represents an “official” entity, such as school, government, etc.
 - In some ways, distance learning has helped to normalize having school staff visit families at their homes (they do not go inside).
- Tracy strives to make school more welcoming, and is committed to listening to families to determine how to do that.
- Social activities helps families feel more comfortable participating, but this is difficult right now, because parents are not permitted to come inside the school, and won't be in the fall, either.

- They do have volunteers and parent ambassadors, but they tend to be the same people most of the time. Parents want to be active, but there are a lot of obstacles that make it hard for them.
 - Families are so overwhelmed, they simply don't have enough time to parent
 - Families may not have received sufficient parenting in their own childhoods to help them learn parenting skills and experiences.
 - Parents may not have finished school themselves, so helping to administer school for their kids is difficult.
- School counselors have been working on trying to improve the social/emotional wellness of kids and families during COVID-19.
- Tracy says that parents in this community would be very well served by assistance with:
 - Basic skills like job training, interview training, getting hired with a felony record, work/interview clothes, etc;
 - Navigating services – not only knowing what is available, but getting immediate lists of places to go and phone numbers to call, without having to wait for later appointments; and
 - Filling out paperwork, which can be confusing even without language barriers.
- The neighborhood lacks reliable public transportation and safe public spaces for social connection, such as parks and playgrounds.



Hope Alive: East Salem

DRAFT

About the project

The Marion County Children and Families Commission (CFC) is a collaborative of community leaders who use their experience and influence to address complex issues that are beyond the scope of any single organization. CFC members are committed to developing creative and innovative solutions to improve the lives of families and to build pathways to hope for every child in Marion County.

Project goals

The CFC seeks to create an atmosphere of hope in the East Salem neighborhood by:

- strengthening personal connections;
- supporting families by helping them find resources to sustain their mental and physical well-being; and
- guiding residents to organize a self-reliant and resilient community.

During the process of this project, the CFC also aims to design a program that can be replicated to help other neighborhoods build communities of hope.

Phase One: Connect With the Community

Goal: Organize community meetings where residents can share ideas, gain support, and plan community improvements.

1. Schedule “Meet to Learn” visits with school principals in East Salem.

a. Develop a set of questions that can be asked of each principal individually.

- i. What are the biggest challenges you see for kids and parents right now, and how are they different from before COVID-19?
- ii. What do you see as short-term needs as opposed to long-term goals?
- iii. What are your fears regarding district budget changes?
- iv. What would you like school to be like when it starts back in the fall?
- v. What would you like people from other parts of town to know about this neighborhood?

2. Organize Community Meetings in East Salem.

a. Find a time that works best (or times, if more than one meeting should happen).

b. Craft questions that allow participants to speak openly and honestly.

i. Parental Resilience

1. How do you manage stress when you feel overwhelmed?
2. Do you have neighbors and friends that you can call on for support?
3. Do you know where to go for emergency help with issues like substance abuse, mental illness, or domestic violence?

ii. Social Connections

1. What sorts of social connections exist in your neighborhood?
2. How could they be stronger?

iii. Concrete Support in Times of Need

1. Has COVID affected your family's income?
2. Do you know where to go for help with basic needs like food, clothing, shelter, or health care?
3. Do you sometimes feel overwhelmed because the process of obtaining services is complicated?
4. Are there barriers that make it difficult for you to obtain services, such as child care, work schedule, or transportation?

iv. Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development

1. Would you like to be able to attend workshops about parenting skills and child development?
2. Would it be helpful to have a way to connect with other parents in your neighborhood?

v. Social and Emotional Competence of Children

1. How have your kids been able to maintain social connections during COVID-related physical distancing?
2. Do your kids have difficulty expressing their feelings or regulating their emotions?
3. What would help kids have an easier time with distance learning in the fall?
4. What would help younger kids be ready to start school?

vi. Building Hope in the Community

1. What would add value to this neighborhood?
2. What would improve lives in this neighborhood?
3. What would relieve some of the stress that you experience?
4. Do you feel supported and motivated to work toward your goals?
5. Are you able to find ways to accomplish the things you want to do?

6. When problems come up, are you able to adapt your plans and try something else?
- c. Ensure that materials are available in both English and Spanish.**
 - d. Determine how to structure the meeting without traditional framework like food or activities.**
 - e. Design an invitation that is engaging and lets attendees know that their input is crucial and they have ownership of their community project.**
 - i. What are urgent and prominent issues?
 - ii. Who should be invited directly, and by whom?
- 3. Compile information learned from all meetings into a comprehensive report that the CFC can use to guide next actions.**