



## Community Planning Council

The Community Planning Council was established by Greenwich United Way to encourage the most effective and efficient health and human service delivery system for Greenwich. Comprised of community leaders, nonprofit service professionals, Greenwich United Way board members, and community volunteers, the work of the Planning Council, particularly through its periodic Needs Assessments, has led to the development of some of the Town's most valued programs and institutions.

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## Community Planning Council Meeting Tuesday 5/15, 8:45 am, Greenwich Library, Cole Auditorium

### Greenwich United Way's Early Childhood Achievement Gap Solutions Initiative: Launch Event

David Rabin, CEO, Greenwich United Way  
Jill Gildea, Superintendent, Greenwich Public Schools  
Peter Tesei, First Selectman, Town of Greenwich  
Janice Gruendel, Fellow, Institute for Child Success and Yale Child Study Center

According to the Greenwich United Way's Needs Assessment, for the past 10 years the community has identified closing the achievement gap as the most critical issue facing our youth.

#### Highlights from the Presentation:

- **Background:** Mr. Rabin noted that beginning four years ago, the Greenwich United Way (GUW) worked on developing three Direct Impact Programs that focus on collaboration and measurable outcomes to respond to high-priority needs identified in the Needs Assessment. One of these three programs is the Early Childhood Achievement Gap Solutions (ECAGS) Initiative. There are very large gaps between the reading and math scores of low-income children and all students in the Greenwich Public Schools. Research indicates that 60% to 70% of the achievement gap is evident when a child enters kindergarten. Working with its key service partners, Family Centers, the YMCA, and the Greenwich Public Schools, the GUW has developed ECAGS, a proven, data-focused approach with two prongs. The first of these is using the national, research-based home visitation model, Parents as Teachers, to serve up to 40 children from birth to three and their families to promote healthy parenting and child development. The second prong is providing a pre-school instructional coach for the Family Centers and YMCA pre-schools that serve a large percentage of low-income children. Research has shown that combining these two programs should significantly reduce the achievement gap. The GUW has raised \$1.26 million to fund these two programs for the next three years. Dr. Gildea noted the importance of early intervention and the GPS commitment to partnering with the GUW on ECAGS. Mr. Tesei spoke to how effective public-private partnerships are in addressing community needs.
- **Research Support:** Dr. Gruendel summarized recent research in brain development that underpins ECAGS. She began by noting that we have not yet achieved the following goals: all children reading at grade level by 3<sup>rd</sup> grade and economic security and educational success being transmitted from one generation to the next. She emphasized that resilience is key to developing healthy families, healthy children, and healthy communities. She cited the 1997 study of the prevalence of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), such as mental or physical stress. Whereas most adults have had one or more ACEs, for low-income children who have a number of ACEs, this turns into toxic stress. In turn, severe toxic stress affects the ability of children to learn and its impact is seen at the cellular level in children's bodies, which can be transmitted from one generation to the next. Research now tells us that 85% of a child's brain structure is developed by the age of 3—so early intervention, which is envisioned in ECAGS, is key. She also noted that it is critical to provide protection from the toxic stress suffered by many low-income adults and children and that the PAT program should provide critical services to address this need. She observed that even young children can be encouraged to develop empathy--though executive function and self-regulation take much longer to develop.

**Next Community Planning Council Meeting:** Tuesday, 6/19, 8:30 am

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