



## South Windsor County Even Start Evaluation Report Highlights, 2001-02

### *Who did SWCES serve this year?*

- 19 families enrolled
- 24 adults
- 32 eligible children
- SWCES continued to provide services to families most in need!

### *What have families done this past year? In what ways have they experienced success?*

#### **Family successes 2001-02**

- ✓ Continued high retention rate of 84%;
- ✓ High long term retention rate of 42% being enrolled in SWCES for 2 to 7 years;
- ✓ 46% of adults who set a goal of secondary education completed this goal, and 53% of these adults continue to work towards this goal;
- ✓ 88% of adults who set the goal of job training completed this goal;
- ✓ 61% of adults who set the goal of employment completed this goal;
- ✓ 100% of adults who set the goal of post secondary education completed this goal;
- ✓ 100% of children eligible for the DRA achieved the standard on the Vermont DRA;
- ✓ 100% of children eligible to take the SERP met or achieved proficiency;
- ✓ Three children completed the COR assessment;
- ✓ 63% of children met or exceeded the attendance rate of their peers;
- ✓ 88% of students were promoted to the next grade level.

#### **Family and Individual Goals Met**

Family and individual goals met include: parenting classes, working to gain custody of children, enrolling son in Head Start, being active on a Preschool Policy Council, completing the Getting Ready to Work program, the attainment of a GED, moving, improving literacy skills, purchasing a car, purchasing a home, children attending primary school and college, and earning a driver's license. *Examples...*

- One family moved into a **better housing environment**. The father has maintained employment for the past nine months while the mother stays at home to raise their son. They are working with their VAL adult educator to improve their credit rating to purchase a home in the future. This mom also noted that her reading skills have improved and she participates in all book classes offered by SWCES.
- One ESL mother recently achieved her goal of **purchasing a home** and is working on painting it. Her youngest daughter will start kindergarten in the fall and her oldest daughter is attending college in Newport, Rhode Island.

### **Family Case Studies using the EFF Role Maps**

SWCES continued to use the Equipped for the Future (EFF) Role Maps to document family activities and success as they work towards and achieve their goals. *Examples...*

- One family continues to concentrate on the family's needs, specifically her children's education, as the mother moves towards the worker Role Map. She recently completed the **GRTW training**. Because of her "employment" experience in the GRTW program as a landscape designer for the SAPCC, she is **considering taking courses at the Howard Dean Technical Center** to further her development in this area.
- Ten families attended the **SWCES Retreat** this year to plan for the next year, placing them in the Worker and Citizen and Community Role Maps. This was a record number, with half of the families attending!
- Another mother active in the Citizen and Community Role Map took action to **improve the Mom's Group** held bimonthly in Windsor. Last summer, this mother wrote a letter to the SAPCC Executive Director, Betty Kinsman, asking for funds to buy materials for Mom's Group. The request was funded and the group was able to purchase craft supplies and food for the entire year.
- Several SWCES families were active in the community through the Citizen and Community Role Map by **writing articles for "The Green Mountain Eagle"**, a Vermont Adult Newsletter written for and by adult education students.

### **Family Stories of Recent Even Start "Graduates"**

Working closely with her home visitor and VAL educator, one mother has earned her GED and child care certification. Her home visitor also connected her with resources in the community for the application and registration process of establishing an in-home child care facility. She is now running a successful in-home child care business. Her involvement in SWCES has taught her how to problem solve and how to get things accomplished. Her VAL educator has also provided her with material from the Community College of Vermont, as she is considering taking some college courses for further education in home child care. She noted that her son received high scores on his standardized tests because of the early childhood education provided by her home visitor. Furthermore, because she runs a child care program, the other children in her home benefit from educational materials, books, games, and toys that the home visitor brings. This mother continues to run her business and advocates for her child at school. She has recently graduated from the program because she met all of her goals and has demonstrated independence from the program.

This mother of five children noted that she feels all of her children have shown considerable progress in school because of SWCES. All of her children enjoy reading and have learned to use a computer because her home visitor brings her lap top on visits. This mother completed the GRTW training program and is considering taking courses at the Howard Dean Technical Center in the fall of 2002. This mother has also graduated from the program as she met all of her goals and her children are no longer of the target age group. She still has frequent contact with staff and still uses them as a referral sources and support.

## *Do families have any areas of concern for their well-being?*

### **Family Self-Assessment Questionnaire**

SWCES staff piloted the use of a family self-assessment tool, "A Measure of My Family's Well-Being" in the fall of 2002. Families will be followed up with in the fall of 2003 to provide comparative data.

#### *Areas of Most Concern to the most Even Start Families:*

- Finance and income
- Employment

#### *Areas of High Concern:*

- Legal
- Shelter
- Adult education
- Transportation

#### *Areas of moderate concern:*

- Children's development and education
- Family relationships
- Community relations
- Social and emotional health
- Work skills and habits

#### *Areas of low concern:*

- Nutrition and clothing
- Physical health and safety
- Parenting

## *How are SWCES children performing in school?*

### **Early Childhood Progress Survey - Comparing 2001 to 2002**

The SWCES staff administered the Early Childhood Progress (ECP) survey in June 2002 to teachers of SWCES students in grades K-3.

#### *Areas that received high marks consistent from 2001-2002 (++):*

- Academic Performance
- Motivation to Learn

#### *Areas that showed positive change from 2001-2002 (-+):*

- Self-confidence
- Parent involvement

#### *Areas that showed negative change from 2001-2002(+):*

- Peer relations
- Classroom Behavior

## *Why is SWCES so successful in working with families?*

### **Seven Major Strengths of SWCES**

1. The on-site option
2. Home-based instruction
3. Connecting families with available community resources
4. Strong partnerships and collaboration
5. Program activities and events
6. High retention rate of families, and
7. Long term enrollment of families.

### **Family Identified Strengths of SWCES**

- The addition of the on-site program;
- Support, flexibility, and commitment of home visitors;
- Promoting parent advocacy;
- Connecting families with other families;
- Activities and playgroups;
- Promotion of learning outside of the program; and
- Providing childcare services.

### **Program Accomplishment and Improvements**

This year, the evaluators highlight several program accomplishments and improvements that SWCES has made to their program. These include:

- ❖ The addition of the *on-site program* - This addition to SWCES services has resulted in many successful outcomes for Even Start families. The on-site option has enabled the program to increase the intensity of services available for families and may result in the expansion of its service area. Families involved in the on-site program report gains in employment and life skills, as well as social and human capital.
- ❖ SWCES staff *professional development* - The on-site staff hosted and participated in several Equipped for the Future framework and goal setting trainings to develop a common language for the on site program and help families set SMART goals. These trainings prompted staff to hold monthly "EFF study groups" with the on-site staff.
- ❖ *Quarterly Advisory Council meetings* - Two major Advisory Council meeting topics included a presentation on the *changes of the Reach Up legislation* in terms of work requirements for families, and a *homelessness panel* represented by local landlords, schools, shelters, Vermont State Housing Authority, a Land Trust, the Springfield Family Center, and a formerly homeless parent. Positive feedback was received for both, indicating that they raised awareness and educated SWCES staff and other area service providers about current issues facing their clients and community.

## *How can we continue to make SWCES better?*

### **Recommendations for Continuous Program Improvement**

The following recommendations for program improvement and evaluation techniques have been made for the eighth year of the SWCES program evaluation, based on this evaluation report. Overall, SWCES should continue to build on its seven major strengths, accomplishments, and improvements that provide the backbone of program quality. Staff, collaborators, and evaluators should also continue to examine areas in need of improvement and discuss strategies to make positive changes in these areas.

#### ***Recommendations for program improvement:***

- ✓ Building on program accomplishments and improvements; and
- ✓ Continuous improvement of SWCES services for adults and children based on client and staff focus groups and interviews, family self assessments, and the Early Childhood Progress Survey.

#### ***Recommendations for evaluation strategies:***

- ✓ Periodic Staff Focus Groups
- ✓ Client Focus Groups and Interviews
- ✓ Collection of State Program Indicators of Quality
- ✓ Track Even Start Student Development Through Early Childhood Progress Survey
- ✓ Utilize the EFF Checklist and EFF Standards
- ✓ Self-Assessment of SWCES
- ✓ Continue to improve communication