

I am writing to express my support in the decision to close the Children's Centers at OCC.

As coordinator of the Early Childhood Education department, I was asked to participate in a meeting with a member of the CBT (ECE consultant- Gessford) and the Children's centers coordinators. I BELIEVE the purpose of the meeting was to determine the ability of the Children's Centers to be able to sustain them financially and to integrate more of an academic connection. It was clear to me at the meeting that the coordinators did not see how the centers could change or improve. We discussed several concerns. The issues listed below are those that most concerned me, in terms of the ability to foster an academic partnership:

- low enrollment (typically few children in attendance- under @ 20% of capacity for a majority of the day; all centers combined serviced less than 130 children – including drop-ins and part-times)
- lack of research -based early childhood educational curriculum (no identified curriculum plan)
- over staffed (provided unrealistic training environment for ECE students- at times 1 adult to 1 child)
- financially unstable and unaligned with industry standards (estimated that the college subsidized costs after tuition payments at over \$15000 per child- staff; salaries were on average double the industry norms)
- low number of highly qualified staff (most met only minimum licensing requirements)
- limited service hours (closed early, limited days per week)

So, needless to say, I was not surprised or disappointed with the decision to close the center (I am assuming recommended by CBT).

I believe there are several better ways to service the OCC student parents, as well as the students in ECE. I personally believe that student parents' needs for childcare can be better served with existing community child care centers. Several centers offer part-time care and flexible scheduling. Moreover, there are various scholarships that provide child care payment help to lower income parents. ECE students were getting inferior and inauthentic field experiences at the OCC center so they are better served by doing their fieldwork and interns in community centers.

Moreover, I think higher quality and more beneficial early childhood educational services can be brought to OCC campus via partnerships with community agencies. I partnered with Joan Firestone, Director of Early Childhood for Oakland Schools, to propose a plan to run a Great Start Readiness Program (GSRP), a free 4 year old state funded preschool, at the Highland Lakes campus (chosen based on the needs assessment in Waterford). Great Start Readiness Programs are funded by the Michigan Department of Education and administrated through the

ISDs. In this proposal, OCC's only financial contribution would be the donation of space. GSRP would provide a FREE full-time program for OCC student parents with qualifying children. Additionally, it would offer an ideal setting for ECE students to have a quality field experience. Some beneficial aspects of GSRP:

- Highly qualified degreed staff- Lead teachers: Bachelor's –Asst teachers: Associates
- Full day , full school year program
- Research based curriculum
- Consistent adults are the same for the entire session, every day the class is scheduled.
- Low Adult/child ratio: 8:1

It is the intention for Oakland Schools to run the OCC GSRP as a model school, which will serve as a prototype for all the Oakland County GSRPs. I feel that this is a remarkable opportunity for OCC, OCC student parents, and the ECE program students.