

EARLY LEARNING COALITION OF SARASOTA COUNTY
BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING
ANNUAL RETREAT

Northern Trust Building, 11th Floor, 1515 Ringling Boulevard, Sarasota
13 November 2006

MINUTES

1. **ATTENDANCE.**

a. Voting Members Present:

Kim Binkley-Seyer (Chair)	Laura Benson	Tami Conetta	Lisa Glenn
Kathryn Stuckey	Jill Jacoby	Lois Natiello	Janice Mee
Bill Little	Chris Kofler	Nora Patterson	David Hicks
Raymond Kaiser			

b. Non-Voting Members Present:

Dr. Norman Goldstein	Sue Loncaric	Hope Kinney
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c. Absent (Voting):

Laura Bauman	Steve Spangler
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d. Absent (Non-Voting):

Ken Modzelewski	Lori White
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e. Staff:

Janet Kahn	Mike Miller	Linda Mason	Mary Wolf
Dianne Rose			

f. Visitors:

Karen Eber Davis	Cheray Keyes-Shima
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2. **WELCOME.** At 4:10 the Executive Director welcomed everyone, and asked the group to introduce themselves for the benefit of the Retreat Facilitator.

3. **OPENER.**

Opening exercise: Describe a memory from preschool or nursery school or playgroup, or other memory from preschool years.

The group shared individual memories. One noticeable theme was that positive memories had to do with "playing", where there was a sense of freedom to play and explore, and negative memories, still strong even after many years, had to do with regimentation or being forced to something (i.e. forced naptime)

4. **OVERVIEW.**

Overall Goals for the retreat are to review and clarify ELC goals and priorities for next 1-2 years and to determine an overall communication plan.

Janet passed out the ELC priorities chart from our approved Plan that now also incorporates the items from the Coalition's previous strategic plan.

5. **COMMUNICATING NOW.**

- a. *Exercise: For members to "state a value or benefit you experience as part of the Coalition."*

Long-term value of the work
Intentional growth

Commitment to increase quality of child care
Passion for young children
Community working together on these issues
My own children have benefited
Making something out of Coalition original legislation/concept
Helping preschool teachers with skill development
Help our kids be better prepared for school
Offering children a positive preschool experience
Being a part of Sarasota county-doing things
Maintain view of bigger picture
Participate in growth/education of child care providers
Education of the business community as to the needs
Addressing touch points
Coalition has a great reputation, glad to be a part of it
Making a difference
Community interest/effort
People involved on the Board
Collaboration and Cooperation

b.. *Exercise: Brainstorm regarding What Benefits/Values Does the Coalition Offer to the Community?*

Scholarships-financial assistance to families to access child care
Provider Trainings and support
Mini-Grants/mentoring, essentials to increase quality
Quality oversight,
An increase in overall quality among childcare sites has been noted
Advocate for child on all governmental levels
Support access to stable, effective and safe learning environments
Efficient \$ allocations
Effective management of funding, grants, securing match
Childcare as a profession, value of the work
Economic viability for daycare provider low-income areas
Parent awareness, knowledge and tools
Education as to why quality is important
Building community leaders long/short term gains 20-30 years later
New initiatives specific age groups
Resource room for providers
Funding/support for providers serving individual children with challenging needs
Diverse group of people to view the same problem
Avoid duplication and inefficiencies
FL standards, teacher education
VPK program
Literacy initiatives

6. COMMUNICATING FUTURE DIRECTION.

a. *Exercise: Journey to the Future – What Will the Coalition Do to Move Toward Its Vision/Mission? Potential statements about child care in Sarasota 5 years from now:*

Retreat participants were asked to: “Now imagine that next to you is a copy of the Coalition’s Annual Report to the Community dated 2011 or five years from now. On the front page you see a picture of happy, busy children playing. You bend back the cover and read in bold print on the first page:

Mission Impossible Accomplished

- This year every child in childcare in Sarasota County receives high quality care.
- Every family receives the support they needed to nurture the learning potential of every child.
- Providers strive to maintain or improve the quality of their care
- Donors and other community leaders step up cover the cost of helping providers make quality gains and
- The Chamber touts childcare quality as one of the 10 reasons to relocate to Sarasota

b. Brainstorming session: You've been in the community making the above happen. What are the elements that will be in place in order for the above statements to be true?

Participants brainstormed the ideal scenario. Refer to the numbers next to each item reflecting how many participants subsequently chose each as one of their top 3 priorities to work on now. There was consensus on the top 5 for the Coalition to incorporate into a strategy plan.

By the year 2011:

- 5** Sites that need assistance have received it and it is a high quality site
- 1** Children are entering school ready to learn
- 10** Teachers have 2 yr degrees, better pay, more they know, the happier the children
- 9** Quality rating system is in place
- Teachers are respected profession
- 1** Support system identifiable and available for families who need further help
- 1** Parents feel empowered and capable with their children
- Help parents connect to kids
- Kids have yearning for knowledge and to learn more
- 3** Obvious to community that investment has made a difference.
- 1** Free Childcare for all, additional Government support, and/or private funds supporting
- 9** Providers happy and earning a good living
- 1** Recognized as a profession
- 15** Business recognize importance of quality childcare/investments
- 1** Parenting hotline
- For every newborn home visit, support for every family (regardless of income)
- 7** All child care sites are of equal standards
- 3** Widespread parenting training
- Communication skills human development
- 6** Well organized, equipped classrooms
- Communities designed for "kid friendly" family friendly
- Children are cherished, nurtured and valued as future citizens and employees
- 10** Widespread community investment in support of high quality child care
- 1** Age appropriate programs nurturing environments
- All children "ready" prepared for school
- 4** Encouraged to develop to the best of their capability
- Accessible, safe affordable babysitting, respite, "matched to needs"
- All childcare sites are of equal standards
- Raising + maintaining high standards, qualified staff.

7. EXPLORING ONE PIECE OF THE FUTURE – THE QUALITY INITIATIVE.

a. Exercise: Quality Rating System (QRS)? Interface with Quality Child Care Council (QCC)

The Board members reviewed the details of the statewide draft QRS plan and took a few minutes to note areas that they would like staff to explore further or modify as to local implementation. The requirements for staff training and qualifications are one of those areas. In general, as had been expressed in prior discussions on this at Board meetings, there was continued strong consensus that a QRS system is needed and will be a viable mechanism to

move quality forward in Sarasota County and a tool to educate parents about quality. Members were interested in whether the state would contribute funding.

There was significant discussion on the importance and details of the ELC role in the implementation of this system with the Quality Child Care Council as it all moves forward, including having a joint/complementary communication strategy and exploring viable business models to ensure the systems success.

Another area of consensus was for investments to be made in those sites that need it the most in order to raise quality overall within the community, across the board, along with appropriate incentives and a strong expectation for accountability. There was also recognition that there would also likely need to be some stipends to ensure that sites that have achieved a high level of quality can sustain it, but a fundamental and more comprehensive understanding of the business model and costs associated with maintaining a high quality site needs to be the basis. The Board asked that the Executive Director flesh out the details of a QRS proposal for future Board consideration. The consultant working with the QCC has already begun to gather information.

8. WHO WILL LISTEN?

- a. *Exercise: Messages for Real People: Business Community, Providers, Parents, General Public*

For each group:

What do we want them to know?

What is the hook? How to reach them?

What do we want them to do with that information?

Parents -

What do you want them to know?

That we exist

Become advocates for children

Choices in community

Quality- their role how to evaluate

What is the hook? How to reach them?

Excitement of what's going on with the ELC

Just providing brochures etc, does not work

Best advocate is satisfied parents

What do we want them to do with that information?

That it all starts before birth!!

Happy healthy children, ready for school

Teacher-parent partnership involved parents

Understand and choose quality

General "Joe Q" Public

Note: This the majority of the community

What do you want them to know?

Quality Child Care is available

What services available

What ELC does

Economic Impact

Impact as Employer

Future pay off-investment

What do you want them to do?

Share info w/ friends

Spread the word

Invest financially, policy
How to reach?
TV, Radio, Talk to friends, newspaper, business/trade magazines, Tiger Bay
Speakers Bureau
Kiwanis, Sertoma and other service clubs
Look for opportunities where our message complements others' message, (i.e.
Juvenile Justice Commission.)

Business/Community

What do we want them to know?

Quality Child Care=happy stable employees
Starts at an early age
Reduce absenteeism
Affordable childcare makes it easier to attract employees
Quality childcare matters, cost money
Quality childcare needs investment
High return on investment in increased productivity

What do we want them to do with that information?

Compile and share info w/ employees on quality child care
Provide child care incentives
Matching funds
Volunteer as mentors
Share info w/ colleagues

How reach them -needs to be with hard data

Newsletters
Trade assoc/ profess assoc
Personal contact
Guest editorials, letters to the editor
Email
Service clubs
Churches

Providers- Note: Coalition already does as excellent job at communicating with and involving providers. That will continue.

9. **REVIEW/CLOSURE.** The Facilitator asked for input on where to go from here.
- a. Regarding the final exercise (*Who Will Listen?*) Janet replied that the Board's goal is to work with Cheray Keys-Shima to craft a community Communications Plan to better educate the people in our county regarding what we do for both families and child care providers, the importance of that, and how they can fit in and help support both the mission and the message of the critical need for early childhood education. We will additionally work with the QCC.
 - b. The Facilitator summarized the first exercise (*Values and Benefits*) as a "tool" to also use in working the Communications Plan; and the second exercise (*Mission Examination*) as a tool for staff and board to compare and reexamine priorities.
 - c. The Facilitator offered everyone around the table the opportunity to express their opinion regarding either the helpfulness of the Retreat, what they think needs attention next, or what they are willing to commit to by a certain date:
 - Lois – felt the discussions were helpful to get us started to actually develop a Communications Plan, a long-time goal of the Board.
 - Dr. Goldstein – felt that we need to continue to look for ways to expand our support of county providers to better educate both the children and parents.
 - Cheray – felt that she now better understood the goals of the Board and who the key audiences were that we wanted to reach with our Communications Plan.
 - Dianne – committed to raising the level of her support to our providers in the future.

- Jill – was looking forward to development of the QRS and ensuring that all providers in the county met the criteria for at least at a “3” on a scale of “1-5”,
- Mary – wants to see us develop and implement a QRS within the next three months.
- Janet – felt that the discussions were helpful to refocus the Board on what we need to do in the immediate future: to develop both a Communications Plan and a QRS. In this regard she “committed” to offering Board Members who are interested and have the time the opportunity to become more involved in each of these efforts, and to adopt specific actions items identified during the development of the Communications Plan.
- Janice – felt that the evening had been very helpful and seconded the importance of Janet’s pledge to get our Private Sector members engaged in the Communications Plan.
- David – renewed his commitment to the “Sink in Every Classroom” project.
- Laura – felt that the evening had been helpful to get her back involved in the work of the Coalition after an extended period of distractions with the local political process.
- Chris – felt that the goals of the Retreat had been achieved.
- Linda – committed to working with Cheray on the Communications Plan, and requested that Cheray review all of our current marketing materials to ensure that we are being consistent in our various messages.
- Bill – felt that the meeting had been very helpful and was impressed with the progress the Board had made over the years in reaching this point of elevating the discussion regarding early education. He also seconded Jill’s comments regarding 3-Star status being a basic goal for all Sarasota County providers, but was concerned that the potential costs could be an inhibiting factor for some. He reiterated the need to fully understand the business model for high quality childcare services and what support/stipends are needed to sustain that.
- Tami – wanted to have each Board Member work to get out the message regarding the Coalition’s efforts to elevate both the discussion and the delivery of early education in their respective spheres of influence, whether business, government, education, or child development.
- Raymond – said “thank you” to his fellow Board Members and expressed that it had been a privilege to work with them for the last five years, as both a Member, and as the Chair for two years. He would miss them.

Kim Binkley-Seyer, Chair