

EARLY LEARNING COALITION OF SARASOTA COUNTY
BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

School Board of Sarasota County, Brown Awning Building, Rooms A-B
The Landings, 1960 Landings Boulevard, Sarasota
16 January 2008
MINUTES

1. ATTENDANCE.

a. Voting Members Present:

Laura Benson	Mike Breton	David Hicks
Jill Jacoby	Chris Kofler	Janice Mee
Lois Natiello	Pauline Tracy	

b. Non-Voting Members Present:

Dr. Norman Goldstein	Sue Loncaric	Lori White
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c. Absent (Voting):

Laura Bauman	Steve Spangler	Kathryn Stuckey
Tami Conetta	Bill Little	

d. Absent (Non-Voting):

Hope Kinney	Ken Modelewski	
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e. Staff:

Janet Kahn	Erin Lawrence	Linda Mason
James Pawlak	Dianne Rose	Mary Wolf

f. Visitors:

Randee Tolbert	Jennifer Ourednik	Eva Balcar
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2. CALL TO ORDER. Acting Chair (Laura Benson, 1st Vice Chair) called the meeting to order at 6:00pm.

3. CONSENT AGENDA.

a. Approval of Agenda for tonight. Agenda was unanimously approved. (motion- Chris Kofler, 2nd Lois Natiello)

b. Approval of Minutes from June 16,2007 meeting. Minutes were unanimously approved. (motion- Chris Kofler, 2nd Lois Natiello)

4. CHAIR REPORT

Laura reported that she still hasn't heard from Governor's office about her appointment as chair. However there have been calls from the Governor's appointment office to local individuals inquiring about both Laura and David, who is waiting for official reappointment.

Laura also acknowledged that she had not been able to focus on follow up to suggestions as to recruitment of new Board members over the past couple of months. But she promised to refocus on this in the coming months.

Both Laura and Janet, as well as Bill Little and Nance Enoch of the United Way Success by 6, and John Lewis will be attending the Governor's Early Childhood Summit next week in Orlando. It is a two day event with the Summit on Wednesday, and an Early Childhood Financing Forum on Thursday. There is a meeting on Friday as well, which is by selected invitation, which is a state level strategic planning session on Early Learning. Policymakers are hosting the event and Laura hopes to be invited to participate.

5. PRESENTATION/ACTION ITEM

a. Annual Audit

The annual Audit presentation was provided by Larry Kraujalis of Florida CPA Services, P.A firm, for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2007. Larry reviewed the report and the opinion. It is a clean report. He worked with the management and the members of the Budget and Finance Committee who initially approved the audit. It is being presented now for Board approval. He reviewed the following items of note:

- Balance sheet: increased cash
- Statement of Activities: Revenues up 1.1 million
- Statement of Functional Expenses: items to note: direct childcare expenses increased close to 1 million, salaries/payroll increased.
- Telephone system-new equipment item
- Statement of Cash Flows on the Cash Basis
- Footnotes: risk of cash over \$100,000 in bank, just keep an eye on bank’s overall welfare.
- Audit Opinion: clean report
- Schedule of w Findings and Questioned Costs: executive summary: There are no questioned costs and no findings
- Single Audit: written version of responsibilities of CPA under GAAP, Independence Statement,

Laura asked for motion for accepting and approving the audit and financial statements. The audit was unanimously approved. (*motion- David Hicks 2nd Pauline Tracy*)

6. PRESENTATION/DISCUSSION ITEMS

a. Building Better Boards

Janet reported that we were given an extension in order to allow more Board members to participate. That is why official report is not published but Janet did have highlights. The written report will be sent to Board Members via e-mail when we receive it. A total of 15, out of 19 Board members submitted the survey.

Shelley Robertson is the consultant assigned to our agency to compile the results and report and to assist us in understanding the results. Janet commented that some of the Board members did not feel that this survey was a meaningful exercise, but a Board is expected to do ongoing self-evaluation, and the Building Better Boards survey, made possible by the Gulf Coast Community Foundation of Venice is an easy to use process that does provide meaningful feedback on the Board’s functioning.

The results of the reported indicated that there are no areas that board members evaluated as low. 8 out of the 15 indicated that they were completely satisfied in all areas. The highest two areas overall were those of fiscal functioning and relationship with executive director. There is still some uncertainty about our committee structure. Shelley said if we had to pick one area of improvement: people were somewhat dissatisfied with whether we are consistently referencing our mission statement with each decision. The suggestion is to always frame discussion and specific policy decisions in terms of how it relates to the mission. Another suggestion is to conclude meetings with a brief assessment of how Board members felt about the effectiveness of the meeting in addressing mission and goals, and whether it was a productive meeting. We can also do a better job of communicating what we do to the community.

Janet commented that the Board had changed its committee structure based on prior recommendations of best board practices. The Budget & Finance committee is a standing Board committee that meets each month but most “committees” are really task forces, or program committees that are under the oversight of staff. Board members are welcome to come too but it is not an expectation per se that ELC Board members must serve on a committee. Especially since

given the nature of our Board, many members serve on committees of other entities within the community with shared mission and purpose (i.e. Success by 6, Partnership for Children's Mental Health).

Laura called for a list of active committees, what they do, and when they meet, both the ELC program committees and community ones that the Board might be interested in.

a. FLKRS Readiness Results

Janet shared the preliminary community wide results of the FLKRS: Florida Kindergarten Readiness Screener. These are not the VPK specific ones, which are to be released next month. The ECHOS portion (developmental screener) went down in our county and in other counties there are widespread variations. There may still be some question as to overall reliability. The DIBELS (the early literacy measure) has been tracked from many years and continues to be tracked over several grades. There is a trend toward positive increases in early literacy.

Lori White commented that the statewide study of VPK shows that it is making a difference. Janet commented that VPK in general has had a positive impact in the community. Laura asked where that data is published. It is on the Department of Education's website. Janet has it electronically and will distribute the most recent report to the Board.

Janet also commented that next year will be the first year we can track individual children back to the childcare providers, as that is a local system being established now with the QRIS.

Pauline asked if when we have good news, do we usually release it or announce it to the community? Janet commented that depending on the results, we'll be able to say x percent had higher results, etc and share that information. Laura stated that this might be a good thing to include in the work of the communications committee.

7. ACTION ITEM

a. Board Approval of Coalition Approved Curriculum and Character Development Program Listings

Janet provided a history of our local process and submitted the proposed recommended listing of curricula and character development programs for approval. The Coalition began identifying curricula several years ago and always had a curriculum position statement regarding expectations for providers on the use of a developmentally appropriate curriculum. Work has been done to train and educate providers over past 4 years on importance of this issue. Character development components are also required. The staff has compiled a list of approved curricula based on research that has been completed, other Coalition's research and listings, information from DOE regarding curriculum, etc. However we have not had a Board approved official list of curriculum and we are required to do so. Janet reminded the Board that VPK providers have a lot of leeway until they are proven to be low performers, in which case they would have to choose one of the DOE specifically approved list. She also commented that the newly released DOE approved VPK curriculum is for 4-5 year old children, and a local Coalition's listing would include those that are developmentally appropriate for all age levels. There is some flexibility so that a provider can submit a curriculum that may not be on the approved list for approval, and the staff will evaluate it.

Laura asked if there is a correlation between curriculum and meeting goals in education and the educational standards that are expected upon Kindergarten entry. Lori White stated that there is a correlatio, and that instructional material aligned with performance standards is what is expected.

Approval Curriculum Listing as presented by staff Listing was unanimously approved. (motion-Lois Natiello, 2nd David Hicks)

There was no public comment.

8. OLD BUSINESS

a. QRIS Update:

Janet reported that the assessment and ratings will occur between February and April. Provides support for high-ratings to stay consistent, have to work through evaluations objectively, based on point system. All sites are to be rated according to same standards. High percentage of centers interested in being part of first group evaluated. Communication plan has been developed: It is a *Look for the STARS* campaign theme. Janet shared the tentative logos, literature for STAR program for discussion and advertising boards.

Laura commented that there would need to be ongoing education and continuous mailings to designated group of people, especially parents, to drive/demand quality in the centers.

Janet stated the 5-star system is an easily recognized tool of quality

Other discussion:

Mike Breton commented that some centers he's spoken to from health/life insurance perspective have told him that because of down turn in the economy, these businesses are suffering, losing ability to keep on staff. What has been the general health of providers in the community?

Janet: we are definitely in a different time in our community. We're aware of the impact in our community from the change in the economy and know that some people are struggling. But there have always been providers that have not had ability to run business effectively. Some new businesses close and new ones open, some aren't running effective and quality centers.

Jill: in the last year we've opened 15 child care centers this year, never opened that many. Probably another reason why people are hurting, there may be an excess of centers that are opening up in certain areas.

Sue: we've felt it as well with the VPK program, went in thinking she'd have 2 part-time VPK groups for 3 hrs, the demand isn't there due to spread of providers.

Mike: If the population of their competition is expanding, centers will be looking for a way to differentiate themselves in a tight market The Look for the Stars Ratings tool is perfect marketing opportunity for them.

Lori concurred that there are multiple economic forces impacting our community. Within the school board, this is the first year that they have seen declining enrollment. Hitting hardest is high school level. It's said that we're in new times, and school district is having difficulty anticipating next year's budget. There is a net loss of students. State is in declining enrollment for the first time in a long, long while.

Janet stated that there has been mass intake to bring families in to scholarship program, not a lot of people moving necessarily, but a lot of people lose their job and are no longer eligible for childcare assistance. Community is unpredictable for enrollment.

Hopefully QRIS will help with marketing and then high-quality sites will receive more money to sustain their program.

b. VPK update:

Our target this year to hit 1600 children served, and we have done that. The numbers increase each year. 2700 kids enter kindergarten, 1600+- are enrolled in VPK. Parents are already calling for enrollment for next year.

Sue said parents are already coming in to tour next year for VPK.

c. Communications Committee Update:

Janet reminded that Board that several members volunteered for this committee. It was supposed to meet during the break between the fall meeting and this meeting, but there was too much going on. The Community Report is being finalized, and that offers a tool for Board members to use to talk about the work of the ELC, so we will wait and convene the work group sometime next month.

9. ANNOUNCEMENTS

Janet mentioned that our 7th Annual Provider Training conference is coming up on the 26th. The theme this year is "*Fear Busters: Turning Teaching Fears into Confident Teaching*" and already we have 343 registered. The special training series for Family Child Care Homes focused on early literacy, sponsored by PBS/WEDU is going very well.

Potential legislative issues: AWI has put forth that school readiness has not had an increase in 9 years. AWI has submitted a request for an additional 15 million dollars. Out of that our community would receive about \$500K.

The state Governance issue as to which entity should oversee the ELC's, early learning, and VPK programs will be a significant legislative issue this year. The OPAGGA report with its recommendation is expected out in March. There will be legislative bills submitted that possibly put the Coalitions and SR and VPK all under DOE, along with potentially licensing too. We will be following this closely.

There should also be legislation to fix VPK glitches such as re-screening issues, etc.

d. Financial Indicators Chart

Laura: The last item on agenda is the financial indicators chart. In all instances, we are within our financial earmarks. Working well to keep dollars with kids, not in administration.

Laura then asked for any thoughts about evaluating the productiveness of the meeting at the conclusion of meeting? She asked if members were more interested in having reports in writing before the meeting or receiving verbal reports with opportunity for discussion? Members indicated that they like both and there should be a combination.

We will implement the recommendation of the Building Better Boards consultant about reviewing and evaluating the productiveness of the meeting in terms of the focus on mission and goals at the next meeting.

10. ADJOURNMENT. The meeting was adjourned at 7:11pm. The next meeting will be on Wednesday, 20 February 2008.

Laura Benson, Vice Chair/ Acting Chair