

EARLY LEARNING COALITION OF SARASOTA COUNTY
BOARD OF DIRECTORS

School Board of Sarasota County, Brown Awning Building
The Landings, 1960 Landings Boulevard, Sarasota
6:00 PM – November 19, 2008

MINUTES

1. ATTENDANCE

a. Voting Members Present:

Laura Benson	Tami Conetta	Laura Bauman	David Hicks
Jill Jacoby	Chris Kofler	Bill Little	Janice Mee
Lois Natiello	Kathryn Stuckey		

b. Non-Voting Members Present:

Dr. Norman Goldstein	Hope Kinney	Lisa Williams
----------------------	-------------	---------------

c. Absent (Voting):

Mike Breton	Steve Spangler	Pauline Tracy
-------------	----------------	---------------

d. Absent (Non-Voting):

Sonja Figaredo-Alberts

e. Staff:

Janet Kahn	Linda Mason	Mary Wolf	James Pawlak
Julia Smirnov			

f. Visitors:

Eva Balcar	Randee Tolbert	Sandy Carpenter	Karen McLoughlin
Connie Snyder	Cheryle Williams	Frank St. Pierre	Williams St. Pierre

1. CALL TO ORDER/WELCOME GUESTS

Laura Benson called the meeting to order at 6:01pm and acknowledged that we had visitors and guests.

2. CONSENT AGENDA.

a. *Approval of Agenda for tonight*

b. Approval of Minutes from October 2008 meeting. Minutes were unanimously approved.
(Motion- David Hicks 2nd Janice Mee)

3. CHAIR REPORT.

Laura Benson welcomed everyone and the new ELC Faith Based Provider representative, Lisa Williams, was introduced. Lois Natiello introduced Cheryle Williams as the new DCF representative who will take over the DCF seat when Lois retires in May.

Laura mentioned the Look for the Stars Kick Off event, which many of the board members attended. Laura stated that it was exciting to see different groups come together for a common purpose. Look for the Stars is a collaborative effort which includes funding from different organizations and leadership of those interested in child care issues. Laura on behalf of the ELC Board thanked Janet and the staff for making our organization shine, the board is proud of the hard work, effective collaboration and results such as the Look for the Stars initiative.

Laura also mentioned the nice testimonials from providers and reiterated that having 133 providers step forward voluntarily to fully participate in the Look for the Stars program was significant. Leadership of the funders of our county, both public and private, working together with the ELC on this project, was also a key of the success. Laura went on to state that as the project moves forward, and improvements happen, we need to continually thank our early care and education providers, because the bulk of the work and the demonstration of success rests with our providers. Providers will need all the encouragement and support they can get.

4. DISCUSSION.

a. Moving Forward the Dialogue with Business Community

Laura Benson framed the discussion by reviewing our prior goals from our strategic planning over the years and identified where we have had significant success: implementing quality improvement programs, sub pool project, board growth and development, comprehensive provider trainings, etc. Fully engaging the business community is our other significant goal. We work with our providers to promote early childhood education success. Employers are impacted as much as our parents. If our employers understand how important it is that quality child care is a business enhancement and productivity tool for them we will find greater partnership in the business community. We have yet to target business community

Businesses are not all that concerned day to day as to how much of an industry child care is, they care about how is quality child care going to effect them. If parents know that the children are happy, safe and learning, those parents are better workers. Laura shared the flyer that staff developed on *Tips for Supporting Employees who are Parents of Young Children* and commented that this provided specific information on what employers can do.

There was then a brainstorming discussion between the board members on the ideas of how we can tap into the business community.

David Hicks mentioned that the potential tax benefits for an employer supporting child care caught his attention and that this was something most employers would not know.

The following ideas were generated from the discussion among all of the board members present:

- Distribute information to chambers, EDC, YPG and local PEO or payroll companies
- Connect with HR associations; restaurant associations
- Prepare client testimonials and other stories to illustrate services and make it real
- Quantify data re: losses to businesses; encourage surveys to identify gaps and needs
- Highlight possible tax benefits; encourage child care as a employee benefit
- Offer parent education on site, CCR & R referrals for child care for new employees (does not cost them anything)
- Don't forget about smaller businesses that may not be chamber members
- Enhanced website section for business, with additional links
- Develop geographic "regions" in the county for partnerships, develop a "barter club" fro exchange of services, large offices could donate space for child care sites, etc
- Target accounting firms who may be looking for different ways to assist small businesses

The question was then raised as to: *What do we expect from businesses?*

Laura Benson stated the school districts made a very clear case that public education is important and engaged the businesses in stepping up to support the referendum or develop partnerships with local schools, etc. We want the community to see the value in early education and set the same standard for children 0-5 for there to be widespread support of the community for early care too. If the business community understands what we offer and how it impacts them, they will be able to engage and strengthen what we do.

Janice Mee commented on the original school board referendum and stated that without the support of the business community, it would not have passed. Janice and Tami both suggests that we should look at ourselves as ambassadors, be available to speak to groups and organizations, chambers... and get the message out. We have a compelling economic message in a compelling economic time.

The Board agreed that this goal item remains an important one for this coming year and can be the primary focus for the retreat.

5. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT.

Written report was sent to the Board with the agenda and other materials. Janet highlighted the following issues:

- AWI performance monitoring draft report to be completed by end of year, it will be an opportunity to look at procedures, programs and identify any areas of improvement. Preliminary feedback was positive overall
- The Look for the Stars launching was a culmination of year of effort. Janet commented that there was a nice article in the Venice paper but that Channel 7 did not make it although they had committed to being there. We later found out that they were covering a story on the overcrowding of the jail. This led to a discussion of the irony of that and the Board instructed Janet to send in a Letter to the Editor (*Note: The letter was later published in the Herald Tribune*).
- All time high numbers for VPK, over 1800 certificates issued, 1753 children enrolled and paid
- In terms of SR intake, we started a wait list so we can see where we are at the end of the year in terms of budget
- AWI has indicated an additional possible 4 % hold back, no other information at this time, a Special legislative session will be likely due to state's deficit

6. NEW BUSINESS.

- a. Introduction of potential private provider representatives-two final candidates; sharing and discussion

Laura Benson asked to everyone to introduce themselves to the guests.

The Nominating Committee had asked for prospective private provider candidates to come to the board meeting and share their interest in serving on the ELC board

Karen McLoughlin- Owner of McLoughlin Learning Centers. Karen has been in FL for 11 years. The first center she opened was North Port Learning Center, which is NAEYC accredited. In 2002 Karen opened Lakeshore Learning Center in Port Charlotte and followed by Pinebrook Learning Center. Prior to this field Karen work in private corporation. Early Learning has been a passion in Karen's life. She brings best practices to her programs. Her programs are involved in VPK, School Readiness and the Look for Stars. This is a natural next step for her programs and she wants to bring best.

Connie Snyder- Has been the Director of Pines of Sarasota Child Care since 2001. The pines is part of a well known assisted living/nursing home organization, The Pines of Sarasota. Connie has been actively involved with the ELC and has watched it "blossom". Connie stated that through the work of the ELC there has been tremendous results in the child care field in Sarasota County and she wants to be more involved and this is an extension of that. ELC has raised the bar and continues to raise the bar. Professionalism in the county has improved. She supports and loves what ELC does and she wishes to be a part of it.

The Board members and the Nominating Committee stated that it was very hard to choose between two final candidates, and in fact it was hard to choose among the four applicants. It was suggested that we have 2 slots for this position. Laura and Tami reminded the Board that the mandated seats are established by legislation and we do have 2 provider seats now, one the faith based position and the other a local private provider. Tami suggested maybe having one designated for South Co and one for North Co, but did not think that the state would allow it. Janet mentioned that there has been another

request from family child care homes who asked to explore a seat for them. Tami and Janet will follow up on and see if there is any leeway in this issue.

Both of the providers were thanked for taking the time to come to the meeting and for their interest in serving on the Board. Final decision will be brought back to the January meeting, as there is no ELC Board meeting in December.

7. ACTION ITEMS.

- a. No official action items for this meeting

PUBLIC COMMENT

Sandy Carpenter raised the issue of why family child care homes and centers are paid differently. Janet commented that she thought that it was based on market rate data, but would certainly confirm that. Janet also stated that she was glad that the issue of provider rates in general was raised as that is an issue that she will bring to the Board at a later date. We need to look at the Infant Toddler rates and consider a rate increase for that age group, based on market rate data.

8. INFORMATION ITEMS FOR BOARD.

- a. As approved by the Board in June, we have entered into all contracts as planned, including the one for our outside accountant, for which we had to do a competitive procurement this year. That procurement process was completed and as a result, we are continuing to contract with Fontana and Associates for our routine (non audit) accounting services.

- b. OPAGGA Report on local ELC Governance issues:

Laura talked about the most recent OPAGGA report. There have been series of reports from OPAGGA over the years on school readiness issues. The current one mentions the 3 state agencies that are involved and comments on whether that is the best model, and it also looks at Coalition's operational expenses. Janet stated that the report determined "admin" costs by using categories that are not considered admin at all, but are really non-direct, so there has been some confusion regarding the costs of the various Coalitions.

Tami expressed concern that with the budget crisis in our state this year that this report will be used to make incorrect assumptions about the value of ELC's and the costs. She reminded the Board of the past issue of forced mergers and hopes that topic is not raised again as it did not save money and it created havoc in some communities. Tami also commented that when a few Coalitions do not perform as efficiently, the state or the legislature creates a quick fix and then forces everybody to follow some exact model. Local control is minimized and not valued in that scenario.

Janet commented that among those Coalitions that merged, they are some of the ones that have the highest costs. Our Coalition is in the bottom third on the ranked list in terms of lower costs to operate, meaning that we are efficient and effective. The merged Coalitions are not necessarily demonstrating at all that there were savings as a result.

In Laura Benson's opinion, the report showed a positive movement towards success of using local boards to control funds and services of ELCs and hopes that is what people take away as the primary message as the purpose of OPAGA is an information source, not to dictate policy of budgets.

Bill Little suggested talking both at the state level and to our local delegation about how our ELC has strong local partnerships, leverages other dollars as evidenced by the creation of the Quality Child Care Initiative and ultimately implementation of the Look for the Stars. As a public/private relationship, it continues to bring additional funds to the local effort. It is a strong point to tell our legislators, that there is a lot of value added in Sarasota based on what we are doing as an effective ELC. Janice Mee agreed and said this needs to be a priority, to talk to our legislators and make sure that they understand the value of the ELC.

8. OLD BUSINESS Update.

- a. Audit Committee update- Mike Breton and Laura will meet to discuss this further. Laura mentioned that they will meet to discuss the process, and that meeting will be publicly noticed as required. She reminded the Board not to engage in discussion with any other Board members about Board business outside of a public meeting.
- b. Retreat (Board wants to discuss this in January)
- c. Executive Director Evaluation/Contract-Laura will finalize the evaluation and examples of other ELC contracts with Executive Directors are being obtained.
- d. *Look for the Stars* official public kick off- November 13- *Already discussed*

9 FINANCE Report.

Written monthly update distributed and reviewed at meeting

10. ANNOUNCEMENTS/OTHER BUSINESS.

Tami asked about the new Form 990 tax return for non-profits which has a lot of new governance requirements that must be submitted. Tami suggested discussing this issue with our accountant. Janet responded that our official IRS letter when we were formed indicates that we are not required to do a 990, but she has been aware of the changes and this is an agenda item for finance committee and to discuss with our accountants. The good news is that many of the "new" governance requirements are items that we have had in place already for several years.

11. ADJOURNMENT- 7:05pm

No meeting in December. Next Board of Directors meeting January 21, 2009