

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
19 March 2008
MINUTES

1. ATTENDANCE.

a. Voting Members Present:

Laura Benson	Laura Bauman	Mike Breton
David Hicks	Chris Kofler	Jill Jacoby
Bill Little	Lois Natiello	Pauline Tracy

b. Non-Voting Members Present:

Dr. Norman Goldstein	Sue Loncaric	Ken Modelewski
Lori White		

c. Absent (Voting):

Tami Conetta	Janice Mee	Steve Spangler
Kathryn Stuckey		

d. Absent (Non-Voting):

Hope Kinney

e. Staff:

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

f. Visitors:

Jennifer Ourednik	Linda Parsche
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1. CALL TO ORDER/WELCOME GUESTS.

The meeting was called to order at 6:01 pm by Chairperson Laura Benson.

2. CONSENT AGENDA.

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

b. Approval of Minutes from January 16, 2008 and February 20, 2008 meeting. Minutes were unanimously approved. (motion- Chris Kofler, 2nd Lois Natiello)

3. CHAIR REPORT

a) **Early Learning Advisory Council meeting**

Laura reported on the Early Learning Advisory Council meeting she attended in Tallahassee. Topics discussed included funding priorities in the face of budget cuts, the need to use more telecommunication in place of meetings, especially in large coalitions, and the time that is wasted by Coalition staff in complying with State monitoring requirements. Laura also mentioned that the Manatee County Coalition is bringing some services in house and is interested in how that process has succeeded in Sarasota.

b) **Legislative visits**

Laura discussed legislative issues and the delegation visits. At the Senate budget meeting Coalitions were told to anticipate cuts of 10% for all agencies across the board. That would result in a loss of 54 child care slots in our community. Monisha Brown, in her presentation to the Senate, reported that a \$15 million cut would equate to \$30 million with matching funds, and result in a loss of 7,000 slots across the state.

4. PRESENTATION/DISCUSSION

a) Legislative Issues, Proactive Planning for budget cuts

Given the budgetary reality, Laura asked the Board to come up with a “Plan B”, what to do to lessen reliance on county funds and mitigate the impact of a 10% cut, such as finding other funding sources or fundraising. The Board discussed possibilities. Lois suggested contacting the workforce board and involving them in this discussion.

Laura said she hadn’t considered consulting other agencies for advice on securing other funding sources and asked how the Board would move forward with that. General discussion resulted in Laura asking Mike, Lois, and Janice for their assistance in finding funding sources.

Bill Little said that every nonprofit is probably doing the same thing and that it would be worthwhile to go through the process of a board review to provide input on this issue. With the correlation between quality child care and employment in the area, the workforce board could look for funding streams while thinking about how other factors in the community will be impacted by the cuts in funding for child care.

Laura suggested finding someone to serve on the workforce board that is involved with Chamber of Commerce. She said she would speak with Dell (In?) or Steve (In?) to recommend someone; Kathy Bayless was also suggested. Laura reiterated that a quality child care system is a real economic benefit to the community.

Laura reported on the Governor’s Childcare Summit. She said there is an economic tie-in within community, job creation and job protection. There exists a much bigger constituency group than just child care-related entities and strategic planning to include the engagement of our business community should be a priority for this year.

Bill said that the Board should look for “emergency” funding until the economic downturn improves.

Janet said that the Coalition had its first site visit from the County for consideration of funding and another one is forthcoming. The evaluator commented that there are many people that don’t see child care as being as important to the community as other factors. Janet responded that the workforce, child care businesses, and employers are all crucial to the success of a community.

Mike added that child care allows parents to work today, and tomorrow children exposed to child care will be more productive. It is therefore not just an immediate benefit, but a benefit in the future as well. He suggested that if the Board can work that angle, it will become an ongoing reason to provide support.

Pauline noted that she didn’t think there is any doubt about that, that child care has always been a top priority for the County.

Janet stated that the County is looking at issues that they may consider more crucial, such as helping families in crisis, providing mental health services, and addressing immediate needs

that families face. As a result, child care may be pushed aside. Pauline suggested that Janet could come to a Community alliance meeting and speak on the importance of child care.

Laura said she will call Steve (In?).

5. ACTION ITEM.

a) Approval of revised financial policy to be in compliance with language on internal controls

Janet reported that the Coalition received results from an Administrative Plan Amendment submitted months ago. The note within the financial statement detailing the Coalition's internal controls was cited to be insufficient, so it has been revised to be in compliance.

Laura called for motion to approve this policy amendment. Chris Kofler motioned; David Hicks seconded. Approved.

6. OLD BUSINESS.

a) VPK

Janet went over the ED report and announced that March 18 was the official kick-off date for VPK registration. 126 families came to CCC in Sarasota to register for both summer and fall VPK and lots of families registered in South County as well. Linda said she anticipates 300 families will register this week. Janet said that statewide VPK is showing positive results for children.

Sue asked if the number of families served changes yearly. Janet replied that it does. She also stated that low-performing providers must use an approved curriculum.

Laura said that the VPK registration rates are great information for community announcements.

b) Report to the Community

Laura asked when the community meeting would be. Janet responded that a date has not been set yet but the report is just about done, so a date will be set soon. The community meeting may tie nicely into business involvement.

7. OTHER DISCUSSION AND INFORMATIONAL ITEMS

a) Finance and Utilization Update

James reported that all areas are within earmark. He reported that Child Care Connection had stopped intake of new children during the previous month and are still not accepting new children. With the proposed 10% budget cut, money was reduced in some areas to maximize the dollars for slots.

b) Program Updates

Janet stated that there are 130 families on waiting list now.

Bill asked if there was any specific reason for the monthly increase and decrease in number of families receiving aid. Janet responded that the number is always related to economic issues. Numbers went way down in the beginning of the year, as always, the goal is to start July just where we need to be.

Mike asked if the Coalition tracked how long someone stays in the program. Janet responded that reports can be run to show that.

Laura said it would be helpful to know the reason why families stop receiving aid, and Janet responded that a lot of families just don't turn in paperwork.

James offered to bring in more specific information for the next meeting. Laura said that if we could pinpoint the correlation between economic events and the number of families leaving it would be helpful.

Janet said that the Coalition has tried in previous years to contact families to receive feedback as to why they have left the area to no avail.

Jill asked about the length of time allowed between a parent's unemployment and finding a new job. Janet stated they have 30 days to find a job. She also stated that the VPK families are staying consistent.

c) Other information

Janet had provided the Board with a written ED report highlighting a number of program activities and other updates. But she wanted to specifically mention a couple of those. Janet stated that the Community Foundation or Sarasota is changing the way it provides grant funding and is looking at specific priority or impact areas. One of those for example is the issue of literacy. Organizations were invited to collaborate and present projects with a focus on developing an early literacy initiative to the education grants committee.

The Coalition, as part of a team with Sarasota County Library System, Children First, and HIPPY presented a proposal that involves a variety of programs to promote early literacy, parenting education, summer camps for high risk children transitioning from pre-k to kindergarten, literacy mentoring for preschool teachers in the classroom, and implementing the Dolly Parton "imagination library" program which sends personalized books each to children. As part of the initiative, the Coalition presented a proposal for a media campaign along the lines of other successful campaigns, such as the SIDS awareness "Baby on Back" to try to educate parents about simple actions they can take to develop their children's early literacy and learning skills. A goal of the Foundation is to follow children in the program from the start of the literacy initiative to kindergarten and beyond, so that accurate data can be collected on the outcome of the project. The presentation and proposed projects were very well received. The ELC is considered a possible organization to be the lead agency for the project. The Community Foundation will be making its decision within the next several weeks.

Janet also mentioned that Children's Week is March 30 – April 5. The County Commission will provide a proclamation and small gifts will be distributed in the Child Care Connection lobby, including pedometers as part of the statewide "Step Up for Kids" awareness campaign. Child care providers have made children's hand art displays; some have been sent to Tallahassee to hang in the Rotunda, some to the local libraries, and some are hanging in the CCC lobby. The ELC partnered with the Sarasota County libraries to celebrate Children's Week and 8 of the local libraries are having special story time events and small gifts as well during the week.

Janet also said that the Look for the Stars QRIS is moving along as planned. Assessments should be completed by the end of April.

Janet also showed the Coalition's display board that will be used at the United Way celebration event next week as an example of new ELC promotional materials. KSC created the Board. It was suggested that the board could also be used in the future as part of overall outreach and marketing.

8. ANNOUNCEMENTS

Next Board meeting will be on 16 April.

9. ADJOURNMENT.

Laura called for additional items; none were presented. She called for feedback from Board members on the helpfulness of the meeting and whether it addressed our mission; it was agreed the meeting was helpful and appropriate.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:57 pm.