

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 April 2008  
MINUTES

**1. ATTENDANCE.**

a. Voting Members Present:

Laura Benson	Laura Bauman	Mike Breton
Jill Jacoby	Bill Little	Lois Natiello
Pauline Tracy		

b. Non-Voting Members Present:

Dr. Norman Goldstein	Hope Kinney	Sue Loncaric
Lori White		

c. Absent (Voting):

Tami Conetta	David Hicks	Chris Kofler
Janice Mee	Steve Spangler	Kathryn Stuckey

d. Absent (Non-Voting):

Ken Modelewski

e. Staff:

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

f. Visitors:

Jackie Fountaine	Tracy Jaekel	Jennifer Ourednik
Randee Tolbert		

**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- Mike Breton 2<sup>nd</sup> Pauline Tracy)

b. Approval of Minutes from March 19, 2008 meeting. Minutes were unanimously approved. (motion- Mike Breton 2<sup>nd</sup> Laura Bauman)

**3. CHAIR REPORT.**

Laura congratulated Lori White on her appointment to Superintendent of the Sarasota County School System, thanked her for her contributions to the Board and called upon her for continued support of early learning issues.

Laura stated that since our county grant for matching dollars was approved, the urgency to find funding as discussed in the previous Board meeting is no longer of urgent concern but will still be a priority as we work to engage businesses in an ongoing dialogue of the economic impact of child care. She reported she spoke with Steve Queior of the Greater Sarasota Chamber as well as Kathy

Bayless of the Economic Development Corporation about the issues and as well as the importance of the Coalition's mission.

#### **4. PRESENTATION/DISCUSSION.**

**Building Better Behavior**-presentation on successful classroom consultation model funded by the ELC that supports children with challenging behavior, Dr. Tracy Jaekel, Community Outreach Services, The Florida Center for Child and Family Development (FCCFD)

Janet introduced the presenter, Dr. Tracy Jaekel, and commented that challenging behavior is a continual hot topic for child care sites. Dr. Jaekel provided a handout of the initiative. She summarized the Florida Centers' program called Building Better Behavior (BBB). With the rise of preschool expulsions, the difficulty of challenging behavior is a huge concern with child care providers. She said that there is an ongoing examination of data that's out there and addressing needs. Sarasota County is one of few counties that have this type of program and support. She briefly provided an overview of the program and provided the evolution/history of the contract with the Early Learning Coalition to provide inclusion and behavioral support.

The Florida Center has been performing screenings and referral for four years, with some children receiving targeted intervention in the classroom, with teacher support. Calls for support for children with behavioral issues has increased dramatically. Last fiscal year for the pilot of the BBB program the Center received between 30 and 50 calls for children with challenging behavior. At this point in the current fiscal year they have compiled data from three quarters and they have already received 114 calls. Teachers are now more familiar with the scope of the Florida Center's services. One to four percent of children have definite mental health problems that need serious support. For those situations, a lot of case management is involved but there are very promising results. In addition to the support for the children, The Florida Center also provides coaching and mentoring for teachers. and host a BBB training series in Sarasota and Venice.

This year they have had 109 classroom visits, 56 visits to centers, and 50 visits to VPK programs. Dr. Jaekel said that a lot of children that have never been in childcare enter the system before attending VPK, which would explain the large number of visits to that age group. The Florida Center's primary tool is the Devereux Early Childhood Assessment (DECA), and the ELC provided funding for the tool and training. The DECA tool identifies the children's strengths using the language easily understood by both parents and teachers, and provides positive feedback and offers specific classroom strategies. The Florida Center functions as a coach and responsibility is placed onto the director and teacher.

Dr. Jaekel shared a few anecdotes detailing the success the Florida Center has had with individual children through this program.

Laura Bauman inquired about which point in the process the parent is brought in. Dr. Jaekel explained the parent sign-off/approval process and that parents are brought in from the beginning and involved to the extent possible.

Pauline Tracy asked for more information about the children expelled from child care. Dr. Jaekel said they are trying to obtain data on the frequency of expulsions versus interventions.

Janet commented that we are also trying to track that more systematically when a parent "changes providers" and also stated that when more teachers are trained and have the tools to maintain challenging children within the classroom, then the rate of children expelled from preschool will hopefully decline.

The DECA allows teachers to have more empathy with the child and understand the child's behavior differently, and engages them to promote resiliency. It also recognizes issues arising in quieter, "non-problematic" children, who may otherwise go unnoticed but still have low protective factors.

Tracy said that a DECA is done on every child but getting post-DECA's is sometimes difficult.

Janet shared an anecdote of another success story of a child who succeeded when placed in a family home. Tracy commented that family providers are certainly a hidden resource and need. That could be attributed to the family environment of taking care of children.

Janet also discussed an idea currently being explored that relates to developing local child care directors or experienced teachers as "first responders", functioning like a triage nurse for screening and initial support. Children who truly need the more intense and professional intervention could then be referred to the FCCFD early intervention team, but those situations that involve training inexperienced teachers could be handled within the sites.

Laura Benson asked about any noticeable change in Kindergarten students. Lori White shared that it is still frustrating to see kids without any experience in preschool school enter kindergarten and have difficulties. There are also children who did go to preschool but come to school with problems and Lori wanted to be sure that teachers are in fact identifying children who need help at that time.

Tracy Jaekel said that if parents refuse to go for services that even if problems are identified, there will be little opportunity for intervention. Tracy commented that we all have to realize that children are in childcare because parents are working. Parents aren't always going to be able to take time off each week, and then there is often a denial of problems. Or a pediatrician might tell a parent that the child will outgrow a concern, etc

Lori asked where the breakdown typically occurs between the referral and the results. Janet said that the major breakdown occurs when parents don't follow through. If a parent mentor role can be created to work with parents that are reluctant to participate it could lead to greater success in early intervention.

Lori suggested increasing communication between the Pre-K and public school systems. Janet said that she would be more than willing to work with her on this issue, as well as to review the data on children in Kindergarten now to see what services, if any were provided, offered, but refused, etc.

Jackie Fountaine asked if parenting classes are offered. Tracy and Janet responded that there are a great deal of parenting classes offered throughout the community.

Hope Kinney shared that at Children First they have the parent sign a refusal form if a parent chooses to refuse referral services. The Center doesn't ever dismiss a child, but they also haven't had one parent refuse services since the implementation of this required refusal form whereas they did refuse before. She noted that if there is parent advocacy, a contract, and follow-up, it makes them a partner in the child's improvement. She also commented on how difficult it can be for the teachers. If there is one or two children acting up in a classroom, it pulls teachers' attention away from the rest of the children and they therefore receive less interaction. Sue Loncaris confirmed this challenge, as a director.

Mike Breton asked if there is there a post-audit after the intervention, and if there is a cause to the child's behavior. Tracy responded that we don't always know what issues have occurred at home that may have contributed to the behavior. She commented that there is data on outcomes if the child remains in care.

Mike asked how teachers deal with kids in 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> grade with these problems. He asked if it was possible that there is some specific knowledge that they have that we do not have at the preschool level that “works”

Janet and Tracy both stated that the cause of these problems is known, the techniques to address them is known, but it's just a matter of having adequate resources to do on a widespread basis.

Lori agreed that it is known how to change children's lives at critical times and how to change family environments, but it does come down to resources.

At this point, Laura Benson said this was a good point to move on. It is positive to hear that our ELC has been proactive in addressing these concerns, that the BBB program shows promising results and that we need to work to make sure that initiatives like this can continue.

## **5. ACTION ITEM.**

*None required for this meeting*

## **6. OLD BUSINESS.**

### **a. Legislative/Budget cuts**

Janet: As of today, no agency has been spared from state budget cuts, and early learning has escaped some of the severe cuts, possibly due the recognition that cutting early learning affects federal draw-down. The way it translates to us is approximately \$100,000-150,000 cut instead of \$280,000 originally expected previously. The current VPK budget is also reduced but the state has from the beginning over-projected the number of children that would be enrolled so that will help cushion the cut. There will however be a per child payment reduction. The final amount is not known yet Many other counties are losing their local matching funds, so we are fortunate that our county has maintained its commitment at the same level.

### **b. VPK update**

VPK update: enrollment continuing to go well and is now up to 400. That number is comparable to last year. We hit our expected target of over 1600 VPK children for this current year and we do not expect to go much higher in the coming year. 1600-1700 is probably the threshold for VPK for our community

The board then discussed the number of children enrolled in kindergarten and the difference between the number of children enrolled in VPK

Laura Benson asked how many kids start kindergarten. Lori White answered 2500 to 2700 each year.

Laura Bauman asked why the remainder of the children weren't in VPK. It was speculated that these children are home with relatives or with the parent. Many parents believe that this is the best thing for children, to be at home.

Laura Benson asked which demographic is less likely to enroll their children and suggested that targeted campaigns would aid in bringing the message to them.

Laura Bauman suggested recruiting pediatricians to pass along the word about VPK.

Janet said that there are always new opportunities to get the word out any additional ideas are welcome. Word of mouth seems to be the most cited reason that parents state as to hearing about any of our services.

**c. Look for the Stars update**

Janet stated that the program is moving along and a more specific update will be presented at the May or June meetings once all of the preliminary data is compiled.

**7. NEW BUSINESS:**

Janet mentioned that the official AWI report on the eligibility and case review monitoring has been received and there are some issues cited that require a corrective action. Staff is working on that and all system issues have been addressed to ensure future compliance.

**8. OTHER DISCUSSION and INFORMATIONAL ITEMS.**

**a. Finance & Utilization Update**

*Refer to written report*

**b. Reasons for termination of services chart, per Board request**

The Board examined the reasons for termination of services chart. Non-compliance and number of families moving out of service area were some of the larger categories.

**c. Is Board interested in tours of child care sites?**

Janet mentioned that tours can be arranged for those that are interested in seeing child care sites in person. Laura Benson suggested an email follow-up to determine interest.

*PUBLIC COMMENT-none*

**9. ANNOUNCEMENTS.**

- a. Next Board meeting will be on May 21.
- b. Laura Benson reminded the Board that a meeting to present the 2008 Report to the Community is still being planned. Details at the next meeting.

**9. ADJOURNMENT.**

The meeting was adjourned at 7:09 pm.