

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
21 May 2008

MINUTES

1. ATTENDANCE.

a. Voting Members Present:

Laura Benson	Laura Bauman	Mike Breton
David Hicks	Jill Jacoby	Chris Kofler
Bill Little	Janice Mee	Pauline Tracy

b. Non-Voting Members Present:

Sonia Figaredo-Alberts

c. Absent (Voting):

Tami Conetta	Steve Spangler	Lois Natiello
Kathryn Stuckey		

d. Absent (Non-Voting):

Dr. Norman Goldstein	Hope Kinney	Ken Modzelewski
Sue Loncaric		

e. Staff:

Janet Kahn	James Pawlak	Linda Mason
Dianne Rose	Julia Smirnov	

f. Visitors:

Jackie Fountaine	Randee Tolbert	Jennifer Ourednik
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1. CALL TO ORDER

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 Bill Little)

b. Approval of Minutes from April 16th 2008 meeting. Minutes were unanimously approved. (Motion- Chris Kofler 2nd Bill Little)

3. CHAIR REPORT.

a. ELC Community Meetings

Laura discussed the upcoming 2 ELC Community Meetings that are scheduled on June 5th in Venice and June 19th in Sarasota. The meeting will focus on the economic impact of child care, how quality child care is a driver of employment, and has both short and long term impacts on the economic development. She stated that we need to invite the chambers, business leaders, economic development council, etc. to be a part of this larger discussion. Laura is asking all Board members, and particularly those who are from business community to make contacts and forward the invitation. All members have a copy of the newly released ELC Report to the Community that will be presented at the meeting. Staff is also preparing a one pager on the Economic Impact of Child Care, that will be distributed as an addition to our community report, as we are trying to focus the presentation on the economic development piece and economic indicators. The room will have displays about the children the Coalition serves, its program initiatives and partners that we work with. The business community is not familiar with how we operate

and we collaborate and partner with others to provide high quality service in all areas relating to children birth to 5.

Laura welcomed new school district appointee, Sonia Figaredo-Alberts- Sonia mentioned that she was a part of the original School Readiness Coalition back in 1999-2000 and the changes that it represented at that time. She is glad to be back in Sarasota and embracing opportunities to join forces for quality child care. Laura stated that we are please that Lori White had selected Sonia to take her place on the board.

4. PRESENTATION/DISCUSSION.

“Workforce Issues and Core Competencies Framework”

Janet explained that we are shifting the way we’re going to do our trainings for child care providers this year. Trainings will be more proactive and we are going to utilize a framework that Palm Beach County has been developing for many years, one that is structured around development of core competencies. In addition, the model calls for clearly defined methods to ensure that there is demonstrated follow up within the classrooms of topics covered in trainings. To put this In context, we have many challenges in the workforce of child care, high turnover of staff, low wage industry, loss of educated staff over the last few years, the impact of economy changes, etc. Janet reminded the Board that in Florida there are minimal education requirements to be a preschool teacher in a private provider. Teachers do not have to have a high school diploma, only 40 hours of relevant child care training. We are therefore faced with wide range of teachers from very inexperienced with minimal education/training to some that have Bachelors and many years in the field. This presents challenges as we are trying to improve and train for quality in a classroom, in addition preschools have inexperienced directors. In addition, there is a similar range of skill with our directors as teachers are often put in a position of being a director, many without the skill and experience needed initially.

We have made many gains in this area with a systems approach. Our Directors Connection series this year focused on training around very specific skill areas for a director. The implementation of the Quality Improvement System QIS is really going to help provide a structure for improved teacher education and our substitute pool, which is now called STRIDE has helped as well, providing classroom ready subs. This program continues to be well utilized. The Coalition is looking at expanding this program to be a centralized recruitment model for the community, so we can recruit teachers, train them, and orient them at the community level to help ensure consistency of training before teachers are placed in the field.

In July the Coalition will be implementing Core Competency Framework. Our Professional Training, Development and Quality program committee has met on this and will be meeting once again to finalize the plans. As mentioned above, it comes from Palm Beach. It provides a comprehensive framework with core competencies that all teachers need to have and then puts them into developmental levels, so there is entry level expectations, mid level, and high level, but all under a core competency. All the trainings go within this framework that also measures results. With the assessments of the sites now completed, we can pinpoint the very specific areas of need. It allows different classifications, organization by level so you can reach an entry level, yet not forget about your experienced teachers that need additional training, support and reinforcement.

The model also provides a mechanism to measure what the trainer taught, and determining whether it is actually “sticking” in the classroom. Teachers would have to demonstrate the implementation of what they learned. It then goes back to the trainer to certify and approve that it had met the requirement. There are also Core Competencies for a trainer, to make sure trainers meets certain qualifications in order for trainings to be certified and qualified for credits. We will look at the measuring tools from Palm Beach County and incorporate them into our trainings.

Comments/Questions:

Laura inquired if this was an additional cost, how is this administered, and is it self selecting. Janet replied, that it is self selecting, however site that are participating in a QIS, that will have an identified quality improvement plan. Expectation will be set for those teachers in particular sites that need training

in specific area. Expectations will also be set for directors. While we cannot force any training, there is a certain level of expectation to demonstrate knowledge in order to be effective and move up on their quality rating. There is no additional cost for us or to the providers to provide trainings within this framework. This past year we have already provided over 60 trainings to 1590 participants. We are looking into perhaps doing less trainings in terms of a total number, but having the trainings be more effective and definitely targeted and focused.

Jackie Fountaine mentioned the CDEA online portal for CDA training. The portal tracks the progress of those who take the course. Janet agreed that this would be one additional resource that can be considered. Jackie asked about scholarships available for this course that is \$199.00, which Janet answered that yes, scholarships could be utilized for this.

Laura Bauman asked if we know where we are in our community with wages for teachers and how that is impacted by training and educational level. Full time child care is very expensive, whereas the teachers' salary is only \$9-\$10/hr. Janet stated, that based on our wages study last year, we are consistent with most other counties in Florida and that wages overall are a huge concern as we all try to increase education levels of those in the field. We are beginning to set expectations for certain levels for example, \$10.00 for those who hold a CDA. Janet stated that many sites have been trying to address this issue too and stated that with a new study, the wages will likely show an increase, due to more participation in VPK, some sites are able to put the additional earnings into wages, for stability, getting a higher educated teacher, etc But we do still see teachers getting hired at \$8.00/hr. and teacher's aides that start at only \$6.75.

Laura Benson stated that it is important to highlight the range of salaries for the business community. Higher tuitions will not cover the true cost of high quality care.

Mike B. was interested in teacher-to-child ratios, Jill clarified that Sarasota county ratios are lower than State ratios. Mike B commented on a very costly cost per hour and Janet agreed that child care is a very costly business to run and maintain. Providers look to have a mixture of scholarship care and private pay clients and/or other sources like grants, etc. Janet commented that the most successful sites are part of a church or a non-profit organization that offers in-kind support.

Bill Little asked about the impact of the high cost of gas. Janet replied that yes, providers are dealing with other related cost increases to run a business, like food, materials, etc. Everything has increased as a result, for a business that is already difficult to run. A teachers who work at a preschool are likely to live in the same area or very close by. Janet emphasized that it's getting harder and harder to maintain business. She foresees many smaller child care businesses going out of business.

5. ACTION ITEM.

a. Corporate Resolution approving the ELC application for County Human Services Funds.

Janet explained that the county requires official Board approval to seek funds. The corporate resolution is the official document that we have to submit to the county that certifies that board had officially approved our application to go forward (*Motion- David Hicks, 2nd- Laura Bauman, Note: Bill Little abstained due to County employment*)

6. OLD BUSINESS/PROGRAM UPDATES.

Refer to Written Executive Director Report

Laura asked Janet if she wanted to highlight anything in the report. Janet responded that the Quality Child Care Council just had a meeting earlier today to discuss timing of releasing the results and in what format, etc. We have data on about 98 centers and 45 family homes. We can see where our training needs and challenges are. At a community wide level, the preliminary results showed highest scores for teacher-child interaction (the Coalition has stressed Social and Emotional Development for many years) and other pockets of strength like program structure, language and reasoning, (where Coalition had worked over the past several years on emphasizing Early Literacy). We are pleased that those two areas

are reflected as strengths. It appears to show that the various trainings and emphasis on particular areas do work. Challenging areas are space and furnishings, which are correctible, and consistent compliance with stringent health and safety requirements, which is an ongoing process that teachers in a busy, active day may miss, but also very correctible.

We may allow limited opportunity for some re-assessments for sites that are very close from one level to another. We had more sites in the 2 star range than we anticipated. We want everyone to be in 3,4, and 5. The message is that this is not so much about "ratings" as it is about quality care across the board, continually improving all programs, and positive outcomes for children.

Sonia asked what will happen after re-evaluations. Will the results be released then? Janet replied that same team that is doing base line assessments, will come back and do some reassessments. We'll determine the ones that are close enough with some level of improvement. Then all of the sites will be re-assessed annually using same process. There is ongoing opportunity for assistance from the Coalition toward quality improvement.

Mike B commented on QIS being a continuum. We can measure the transition of improvement. To overcome initial issue of "rating" system, the challenge is to create awareness there is a base level of competency that has been achieved when you have a rating of 1 or 2 which makes you a legitimate business, but with a lot of room for improvement. Mike B also commented that we provide a process and pathway to follow and hopefully providers now will recognize the value and take that pathway. Mike B commented that at the end of the day these programs all relate to the value they can provide the families that need their services.

Due to licensing standards being very minimal in Florida, part of our education will be to help people understand that a 3 star site is demonstrating consistently good quality and that we need to educate parents to demand and ask for quality.

Janice Mee acknowledged Janet and that staff who have created a climate where providers know that we are coming in with help and assistance. We created a positive climate for an opportunity to grow. Janet commented that Coalition has developed a very strong relationship with our providers over the years, and that we are proud of that relationship.

7. OTHER DISCUSSION

- a. Finance & Utilization – *Refer to written report*

Note: As planned, we have submitted a request for 175k additional funds from AWI to cover child care costs for remainder of the year.

- b. Legislative Issues -*Refer to Written Executive Director Report*
- c. Other:

Jackie Fontaine asked about when we will have the Readiness Rates of children in VPK for 2007-2008. Janet replied that it is always the following year and results are usually released in January. The results for 06-07 have been posted since February.

Laura Bauman expressed interest in hearing an update on any changes or issues based on the numbers of VPK providers and children expected for the coming year, since VPK has grown so much in the past three years, and whether there is any impact of budget reductions on VPK, etc.

9. ANNOUNCEMENTS.

- a. Next Board meeting will be on June 18th (need to approve new FY budget)

10. ADJOURNMENT.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:47 pm.