

# 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  
September 17, 2008

## MINUTES

### 1. ATTENDANCE.

a. Voting Members Present:

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

b. Non-Voting Members Present:

Hope Kinney	Ken Modzelewski
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c. Absent (Voting):

Tami Conetta	Laura Bauman	Steve Spangler
Pauline Tracy	Kathryn Stuckey	Bill Little

d. Absent (Non-Voting):

Dr. Norman Goldstein	Sonia Figaredo-Alberts
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e. Staff:

Janet Kahn	James Pawlak	Linda Mason
Dianne Rose	Mary wolf	Marjorie Fondacaro
Julia Smirnov		

f. Visitors:

Randee Tolbert	Jennifer Ourednik	Doreen Moskowitz
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### 1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 pm by Chairperson Laura Benson.

### 2. CONSENT AGENDA.

a. Approval of Agenda

b. Approval of Minutes from June 2008 meeting.

**Note:** A quorum was not reached until later in the meeting, and we did not return to approval of the consent agenda.

### 3. CHAIR REPORT.

Laura welcomed Board members back after the summer break. She commented that we have once again been very fortunate in terms of any hurricanes here and reflected on the destruction of Hurricane Ike.

Laura stated that she had no official Chair's report at this time. She commented that tonight's presentation would be a good opportunity to reflect back on the vision of the Chair at that time, and that will help serve as a reminder of where we have been as well as provide a context for our work going forward.

Doreen Moskowitz was welcomed back as our AWI program analyst now taking Linda Parsche's place. Laura Bauman was congratulated on the birth of her first baby- that is why she is not present time.

Laura then introduced the PowerPoint from Oct 16th, 2002 that Raymond Kaiser, the former Chair, presented to the ELC Board at that time. This is looking back 6 years ago.

#### **4. PRESENTATION.**

##### a. A Look Back...

*Revisiting Chair's Vision from 6 years ago*

*Revisiting the original "Platinum" SR Plan*

Janet presented a PowerPoint and explained that this was Raymond's vision back in 2002, when he first assumed the Chair position and when Janet was first hired. Raymond had a great vision of where ELC could be. Looking back on his vision now, it was very relevant although he was ahead of his time, which of course is what makes someone a visionary. He framed his vision in three areas - *Inform, Learn and Act*.

As Laura commented, the ELC was not quite ready for Raymond's vision and it was not fully understood as the ELC was still very operationally focused at that time and the work was done through the former central agency. Raymond remained Chair for 3 years before Laura Benson took over the first time as Chair. Many things changed during that time, including the huge shift in the service delivery model and the implementation of many initiatives to achieve the goals of the ELC. Laura commented that Raymond would be proud of the work we have done and where the ELC is now as well as other important initiatives for children in the community, of which the ELC is a significant partner.

Raymond encouraged the Coalition to shift to a business model, which was very relevant and appropriate, not only for the Coalition but also for non-profits in general. He wanted to change our focus from only looking at the dollars and child care "slots" to looking at efficiency and effectiveness and delivering services that added value. He also wanted the process to be looking *at investing in children* and understanding the needs.

Raymond focused on the need to fully understand data about children and what is really needed to make change. Raymond envisioned a centralized data collection point about the children in our community, with current research and real time data about what is needed and how to meet those needs, and to use research to inform and determine practice.

He also talked about ways to reach, inform and engage parents. He particularly stressed the need to be more informed about how to address the needs of children who need early assistance, those with "challenging behavior" and for parents and providers to recognize the warning signs and what to expect developmentally at each age.

He stressed the need for all to understand the fundamental question as to what does "School Readiness" really mean and making sure we had identified how to really do promote school readiness and continue to address the barriers. The importance of community collaboration and coordination of services was a key theme as well as the need to focus on ensuring the value and intended impact of the efforts. In addition,

There are many examples in our community of implementation of many of the elements in the vision described above, some initiated by the ELC, some in which ELC is a significant partner in supporting those efforts.

There a lot of work on our community focus on working together to strengthen our work with parents, whether it's the parenting information provided to SR and VPK parents, or the Ready Set Grow Fair, the Kindergarten Calendar, where multiple partners work together to reach and inform parents. Various groups are collaborating much better now and partnerships have been strengthened. The Whole Child project that helped identify both gaps in service and those areas where change could be initiated.

Our ELC has done a lot over the years to help providers to recognize when children need assistance to and what to expect from different ages, what to do and where to follow up. Our comprehensive inclusion program with various initiatives to address children with special needs, is an example of that.

Raymond would be very interested to hear on what is going on with the Sarasota Partnership for Children's Mental Health, because he wanted to see our community to have a systems approach to children with challenging issues and problematic behaviors. The Sarasota Partnership for Children's Mental Health has brought our community together to focus on this critical issue.

Mike Breton commented that it appeared that Raymond gave us formal language to manage process , not people. We analyze what we do and make decisions based on it. Learn what we done, and experiences, process improvements, Raymond just presented in an abstract, higher level.. We manage processes and system, giving us the architectural plan. Raymond was trying to lead and motivate and inspire with a high mission, giving us the steps to get there

Janet and Laura commented that looking 6 years ago, we have made lots of progress. Janet mentioned the original Sarasota Platinum Plan, the first plan that was submitted to the state that outlined the intended work of the then, School Readiness Coalition. Between that and the vision statements of Raymond, we have a lot to reflect back on Laura commented that even though she did not see this particular PowerPoint, Raymond had continuously referred to the concepts within it. As we do our next strategic visioning, it might helpful to revisit some of the specific points, to answer Raymond's key question of a "are we ready and in position, are the resources available" to carry out the next steps going forward.

Janet commented that we will need to do a new Plan for the next year as the one we are approved for now ends in 2009. Mike Breton asked what the timeline of "next year" meant. Janet clarified that she meant that by July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2009 (the next fiscal year) a new plan would have to be in place for us. Although we do not know yet what the process for the new plan will be as AWI changes the plan, format, document, and process each time, we can start shortly on visioning, needs assessment, goals, etc. Since this becomes a three year working plan, the Board does need to be involved in its development, as well as well as groups in the community, focus groups, meetings with partners, etc.

Janice Mee asked whether there will be any information from the upcoming AWI audit that would inform the work to develop the plan. Janet commented that yes, practice issues might come up, there could be a shift in focus, we may learn more about best practices and what other Coalitions are doing

## **5. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT.**

*Written report was submitted prior to meeting*

Janet reminded the Board that a monitoring team from AWI is coming to our Coalition the week of October 13<sup>th</sup> and representatives will be coming to the next Board meeting. Once every 3 years we get monitored for all of our programs, every year we get monitored for our eligibility files, and every year we get fiscal monitoring.

For this extensive monitoring, the group will spend a week with the Coalition. They will visit providers and have a focus group with providers, and with parents if possible, meet with Board members, call other Board members, and interview staff on key program areas.

In preparation for this upcoming monitoring, staff participated in an extensive self assessment process over the past two months, with 4 lengthy questionnaires completed and multiple supporting documents sent up to the state team. Janet stated that we believe that we are fully in compliance with all required items. This has been an opportunity to evaluate practices and procedures. We are always so busy that we move from one project to the next, this provided valuable opportunity to reflect on internal improvements for maintaining documentation of activities, etc.

In terms of our prior eligibility monitoring, Janet commented that we are still trying to resolve last year's. She informed the Board that we are down to a few files that AWI is requesting repayment and in these circumstances there was staff error in determining the parent fee. However the amounts in questions are as small as .16 cents, .56 cents, and in total less than \$300. Several Board members, particularly our private sector members, expressed frustration at this expectation.

Janet informed the Board that she will be requesting AWI to address an official process for this, as we are the first Coalition to be asked to repay funds, and to look at an appropriate threshold in terms of dollar amount to repay. It will cost considerably more to repay .16 cents that it is for the state to absorb that, for example. We are also questioning the expectation of zero error rate, although that is certainly something we strive for, it is completely unreasonable given the sheer number of transactions that staff process each year.

## **6. OLD BUSINESS.**

### **a. QCC/ QIS update, Community celebration and official launching of program**

Janet highlighted that on October 28<sup>th</sup>, Coalition will be celebrating an official launch of the Look for The Starts program to the public. *(Note: The date was subsequently changed to November 13<sup>th</sup>)*

The Quality Child Care Council wanted to do a "thank you" to the participating providers and recognize those that are committed to quality, the community, the funders, etc. It is set for a breakfast, because it is time when officials and media are more likely to come.

### **b. Establishing Audit Committee**

The Board had asked Janet to research the elements of an audit committee, which she did and forwarded that information to both Laura Benson and Mike Breton, who has agreed to chair this work group. Anyone else who is interested in serving on the audit committee should let Janet know. Audit committees are being recommended as a best practice for non-profits. Also it is likely to become a requirement for our state contract. It is an extra level of oversight, looks at insurance, fiscal practices, and evaluates any potential financial or liability risk factors. The audit committee has different members than the ELC Budget and Finance committee and can have outside expertise. Mike will outline a potential participation list for the committee, which would likely meet once per year.

## **7. DISCUSSION/New Business.**

### **a. Board Composition (Faith Based representative, Term limits, Officers, recruitment)**

Laura Benson mentioned that we have some vacancies on the Coalition Board. Sue Loncaric, our faith based representative fulfilled her term as of October 2008. We have 2 applications, maybe 3 for this mandated position. The nominations committee will review the applicants and make a recommendation for the next Board meeting.

Our Board has now been in existence long enough that some board members are reaching term limits. Ken Modzelewski is the first board member to reach that. His last Board meeting will be the October one. Ken was thanked for his long standing commitment to the ELC Board. He will remain active in the QCC. He is the current provider representative on the Board and we will be requesting applicants for this seat.

Since Laura is now the officially appointed Chair, Board has a vacant Vice Chair position. Any Board member interested in this officer position should let Janet know.

Laura mentioned that we should continually be looking at private sector individuals who may be interested in serving.

b. Banking Concern

All Coalitions have been examining the issue of whether funds in the bank are secure given the current economic situation and the number of banks failing, especially since funds are only insured up to 100k. Our current bank is Wachovia and there are concerns. James and Eric have been reviewing options and this has been discussed in the Budget and Finance Committee. Ken mentioned that he and his Board have moved funds into a CDARS account. (*note :since this meeting, there have been changes at the federal level and with Wachovia specifically*)

c. Financial threshold report

James reviewed the financial indicators/threshold report. One item to note is that the VPK admin % is higher than 5% at this time due to the fact that this is the time when the children are being enrolled. This % goes down in subsequent months once enrollment is complete for the year. It goes back up again in the Spring, but is monitored to ensure that overall we are in within the 5%. Last year we ended at 3.9%.

In addition, slots are somewhat low as is typical when we have large numbers of families leave the community during economic downturns. Intake however is steady and we have been enrolling families since July.

Protective services and our workforce dollar slots spent are higher than what we budgeted for during the course of the year. In Essence it's helping our slot percentage, wrong type of slots performance we want to see

Ken had asked if we saw an increase in VPK children, Janet replied that we have a slight increase. We have seen over 1800 parents and enrolled well over 1500 so far.

Ken mentioned that enrollment is down in his centers and in our school district. Jill commented that despite this, licensing office had opened 25 centers in the last 18 months, in addition there are 5-6 people that are in the process of opening centers. It is unlikely that all of the sites will be able to enroll children up to their desired capacity.

## **8. ACTION ITEMS.**

*No other specific actions items for this meeting*

## **PUBLIC COMMENT**

Jennifer asked if we had seen an increase in the VPK Summer enrollment over the last year. Linda Mason and James replied that it was about the same. Janet commented that Summer VPK is not the most popular choice for parents.

Randee Tolbert asked if we are processing Scholarship applications for financial assistance for families, and Janet and Linda both confirmed that intake is open and families are being processed.

## **9. ANNOUNCEMENTS.**

- AWI Monitoring Team here week of October 13<sup>th</sup>
- Nominating ad hoc committee meeting October 6<sup>th</sup> (Tami Conetta's office)

- Janet mentioned that Ken is working on establishing a model preschool; we are here to support him. He is visiting other centers across the state.
- Janet also congratulated Hope Kinney on Children First having 2 of our 5 star sites.
- The Board was reminded about the October 29<sup>th</sup>, 2008 - Glasser/Shoenbaum Event

**10. ADJOURNMENT.**

The meeting was adjourned at 7:01 pm.

*Next Board meeting October 15, 2008*

Laura Benson