

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 – October 21, 2009

MINUTES

1. ATTENDANCE

a. Voting Members Present:

Mike Breton	Tami Conetta	David Hicks
Jill Jacoby	Chris Kofler	Bill Little
Janice Mee	John Stump	Amy Tuck-Farrington
Cheryle Williams		

b. Non-Voting Members Present:

Hope Kinney	Connie Snyder	Lisa Williams
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c. Absent (Voting):

Laura Bauman	Nicole Parker	Steve Spangler
Kathy Stuckey	Pauline Tracy	

d. Absent (Non-Voting):

Judy Corso	Sonia Figaredo-Alberts	
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e. Staff:

Janet Kahn	Linda Mason	James Pawlak
Valerie Walton	Mary Wolf	

f. Visitors:

Raphael Gomez	Jennifer Ourednik	Randee Tolbert
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2. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:02. Tami Conetta welcomed everyone.

3. CONSENT AGENDA

Tami asked for a motion to approve the consent agenda. Motion passed.

4. PRESENTATIONS:

Janet showed a power point presentation that included both the Annual Report highlights and the Look for the Stars report highlights. Refer to copy of PP for details. The slides included the following:

- served over 4000 children this past fiscal year (SR and VPK)
- served 1494 School Readiness families
- served 2108 School Readiness children
- served 2002 VPK families
- served 2040 VPK children
- had multiple monitoring, all went well
- faced budget cuts and merger talks
- had increased number of mandated referral with low attritions
- completed year 2 of the Look for the Stars program, very promising results
- continued the social marketing of the LEAF program
- have 230 total providers for the county

- those providers currently serving about 6500 total children in care in the county , lower than usual due to economy, capacity has been much higher in prior years
- 62.8% of children served were in the working poor category which is reduced this year, as more mandated children were served
- Administration costs remained low
- 1349 Ages and Stages developmental screenings which then include 24% needing to be rescreened
- 377 additional screenings conducted
- 539 total screening and onsite support services
- 50 % of screening requests were for behavioral concerns which has steadily increased over the past few years
- number of hearing and vision screenings significantly increased
- there was a huge increase in the number of teachers attended our community trainings which included follow-up activities this year (2900 participants in 123 trainings)
- STRDE program had a decrease in sub days used this year but was still more than the first year of this program
- Look for the Star had less 1 and 2 star sites and many more 3 star sites (100 3 star sites now)
- 48 sites increased their star level
- 38 maintained their star level
- 23 dropped a star level but only 3 sites dropped below a 3 star level
- comparison of the number of children in 3 star sites in the first and second year of the program and many more SR children are now attending 3 and 4 star sites
- attending trainings made a difference in improvement
- sustaining quality at the 4 and 5 star level is a challenge
- Infant/Toddler classroom scores overall are lower and this is a concern which will be a focus of trainings this year
- lost some ground in the interaction area
- completed a survey of wages and this is another area where we lost some ground as salaries have seen some reduction
- 512 visits to the Resource Room
- 133 teachers received scholarships to the state conference
- 6 family providers received scholarships to their annual conference
- 34 QIS scholarships provided
- 1400 Kindergarten check lists completed
- 1600 children at 31 sites received 5300 books from the Reading is Fundamental program

Challenges for the upcoming year:

- Budget, possible additional cuts
- Ensure positive quality gains maintained
- Lost ground in wages for childcare teachers
- School readiness funding hole, what happens when ARRA goes away?
- Competition among partners causing strains in previously good relationships
- Largest waitlist ever, how are we going to serve those families? Still over 1000 as of today
- Ensure the importance of Early Learning messages are heard in the community

Samples of outreach publications were passed around and Janet stated that staff attended many outreach events within the community. Linda Mason thanked Bill Little for the connection to the benefit fair for county employees. Coalition staff attended 3 of these fairs across the county and lots of information was given out.

Raphael Gomez suggested to start with the challenges at the beginning of the slide presentation next time and then commented that this report was excellent. Raphael also mentioned that his responsibilities are being realigned at that state level and this will be the last Board meeting he will be attending. He stated that has enjoyed working with this Coalition and Board and that at the state level Sarasota is recognized for the great work it does and it is a model Coalition. Janet stated that the audit

was finished today and Pat Weyer stated that Sarasota is “a hidden jewel” and one of the better ELCs, and that staff was pleased to hear this feedback.

Janice Mee added that Janet has become an important community partner with other entities and continues to bring information to the larger community and this has helped all around.

Tami asked when you see the centers that are dropping in star levels is there a general trend of the cause. Janet and Mary Wolf stated that there is a challenge to have consistent care in each classroom and the decreases were primarily those providers trying to maintain a 4 or 5 star level. As providers become more familiar with the tool and are more aware of training we should see those scores come back up. Discussion ensued regarding the assessment tool, understanding what is being evaluated, what areas may have been new and not evaluated on last year. Hope Kinney commented that certain things were not noted in the prior year that were in this year’s assessment. Lisa Williams stated that she has taken responsibility for not fully understanding the specific items and has focused on this for the coming year. Connie Snyder stated that she is moving forward and looking at the positive elements of the process. All three providers commented that there was no issues with the Coalition staff, but some frustration with the tool and the assessment process.

Janet stated that the tool and the team of assessors are the same as last year, and that the tool is still considered nationally and in the other Florida QIS systems to be reliable and valid. But we are planning to address the concerns with the Children’s Forum team prior to the coming assessments.

Mike Breton stated that his understanding of the shift of children attending 1 and 2 star sites into 3 and 4 star sites was very meaningful but splitting hairs on whether a site is a 4 or 5 star doesn’t seem as important and the message needs to be that the quality of programs are being increased. Additionally, Mary reported that the tool is updated periodically and posted on the website but many times different classrooms and different teachers as well as different children were assessed so it will never be an exact comparison from one year to the next. Discussion also included that there are many items within the tool that reflect the child’s experience within the classroom, using the tool as a picture of your program and getting training in the low areas, fixing the areas that can be fixed, tool allows for some weakness in areas but still can score high overall.

5. CHAIR REPORT

Tami reported that her application is still under review and that she is still recognized as the interim chair, although the Governor almost made an appointment based on the current applications that had already been vetted. Our Coalition will now be in the final group for chair appointments.

Tami stated that as a group she feels we need to refocus on our ELC specific communications plan and would like to see if KSC Advertising can attend the next Board meeting and get back to the original communications plan. The communications around the Look for the Stars and LEAF have been very successful and we need to now have that focus be on ELC and its work. There is still a need to reach out to the business community and educate the community on early learning and what the Coalition does.

6. ACTION ITEMS

Approval of second term for Board member:

Mike Breton’s term is up as he took over an existing term when he first came to the Board. This renewal is for another two year term. Tami thanked Mike for his willingness to continue to serve on the Board. Motion was made to renew Mike’s board membership by David Hicks and seconded by Janice Mee. Motion passed.

7. PUBLIC COMMENT

None at this meeting.

8. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT

Janet reported she sent out a written report prior to the meeting and a lot of the report has already been covered in the discussion related to the presentation. The most recent eligibility monitoring went well, we did have some relatively minor and very correctable things with just a few things that were found that cannot be corrected. All in all, we were in compliance overview and some best practices noted. The AWI fiscal monitoring will be coming up in December.

9. DISCUSSION ITEM/ NEW BUSINESS

a. Legislative/Communication Workgroup Report and Plans:

Amy Farrington reported that we met with almost all of the local legislators over the summer and we now need to switch over to communications with this committee as well. This would include more of where we can leverage our resources, and get the word out about the Coalition.

The Orlando Sun newspaper recently ran a series of articles regarding people working in facilities serving the elderly and children that were felons and their background screenings had not come back yet or given exemptions. This led to some outrage and in turn the Governor has officially announced a task force of the eight agencies that are involved in the background checking to look at how to streamline the process. This task force will have a very quick turnaround time. Amy will send the links to bills that have been filed regarding this issue.

Legislative meetings have been held and went well. The committee is going to get Janet onto the agenda to present at the delegation meeting to present general information. Janet previously sent out a survey to everyone regarding any legislative contacts and Amy reminded everyone to return the survey. A committee meeting is scheduled for 11/3 to review communication plans. Janet will be presenting at the Leadership Education Sarasota Day.

10. OLD BUSINESS:

None at this meeting

11. FINANCE Report:

James Pawlak stated that we have concluded our first quarter of the fiscal year. Our Admin. costs were at 3% and non-direct costs at 8.8% which are both a little less than where we were last year. As it is right now there is a projection of 44K surplus and any surplus we have this year will more than likely be used towards child care slots. Quality is right on target for the first quarter. The Gold Seal amount was reduced from previous year and we are pretty much on track to spend what we have budgeted. Infant/toddler we have spent around 14K so far and staying on this track we will be over the minimum threshold required. CCRR-Child Care Resource and Referral is on track to spend approximately 15K over the minimum required. Child care slot funds were held back a little bit before we opened up enrollment to cover slow attrition and we are currently where we should be on children served with the possibility of adding 20-30 children. ARRA funds are being used and we are required to spend 30% which we should have no problem doing. A little bit of these funds will be saved to use for next fiscal year with a goal of expending a total of 60% of the funds. VPK is slightly ahead in total expenditures but will be in compliance without any problems. ARRA funds are being used also in VPK.

James commented that our Annual Audit is still in process and going well. This is a new audit firm. The audit may be ready for November presentation to the Board, but that is not certain yet.

Cheryl Williams asked how long it takes to process someone off of the waiting list. Linda Mason responded that a letter is sent to the parent, depending on their response time, they could get in for an appointment within a week, and then if all documentation is obtained at that first meeting, children could be enrolled that same week.

In prior years, we were able to serve families on the list within about 3-5 months, but families now are waiting longer. Janet stated that we have previously discussed looking at different ways to serve those on the waiting list in terms of mailing them resources, encouraging them to call R&R to possibly get to some providers that may have slots put aside for their own scholarship, we have put in for some funding to be able to fund and offer some non traditional child care and we are going to try and look at some new partnerships. Linda stated that the number on the waiting list always needs to be verified every few months and we will be sending out letters to everyone and the list will then be purged. We pull the

names off the list in a combination of when they came in and the point system that has been previously approved by the board and that is in our Plan.

12. ANNOUNCEMENTS.

None

13. ADJOURNMENT.

Meeting adjourned at 7:12 p.m.

DRAFT