

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 – April 15, 2009

MINUTES

1. ATTENDANCE

a. Voting Members Present:

Mike Breton	David Hicks	Tami Conetta
Chris Kofler	Bill Little	Janice Mee
Cheryle J. Williams	Kathryn Stuckey	Pauline Tracy

b. Non-Voting Members Present:

Hope Kinney	Lisa Williams
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c. Absent (Voting):

Laura Bauman	Laura Benson	Steve Spangler
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d. Absent (Non-Voting):

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

Janet Kahn	Mary Wolf	James Pawlak
Valerie Walton	Marjorie Fondacaro	Dianne Lawrence

f. Visitors:

Raphael Gomez	Randee Tolbert	Jennifer Ourednik
Amy Tuck Farrington	John Stump	Lois Natiello

2. CALL TO ORDER. The meeting was called to order at 6:00pm.

Tami Conetta, Vice Chair, welcomed everyone and stated that Laura Benson is currently in Tallahassee. Tami also stated that there are 2 potential new board members in attendance this evening.

3. CONSENT AGENDA. Tami asked for a motion to approve the consent agenda. *Pauline Tracy made a motion to approve, Mike Breton seconded. Motion passed.*

4. PRESENTATIONS:

a. VPK readiness rates, local information and state trend data

Janet Kahn presented a power point presentation with information from the Department of Education on the VPK readiness rates statewide and included local data. Janet stated that there have been lots of debates among Early Childhood experts regarding if the screenings are appropriate method to determine success of VPK programs. They do not measure progress a child may make, for example. She stated that regardless of these discussions, the results do show overall that children who have attended VPK do better by being in the program. There is a benefit to the families as well as the children in that VPK does offer those parents not eligible for other assistance an opportunity for their children to attend preschool, and offers a price break for all other parents. Janet reminded the Board that there are 2 parts to the current kindergarten and VPK screening and together they are called FLKRS.

Charts in the presentation showed:

- children fully demonstrating skills at Kindergarten
- children with emerging progressing skills and children with concerns
- letter naming skills

- which county of FL are doing well and which ones have some concerns
- comparison data between years
- DIBLS from the first year of VPK to current year, showing increase in early literacy
- The number of VPK programs and how many are included in the readiness rates (some are not included in the rates due to having less than 4 children or their children did not complete the program)
- Local data broken out by the level. Sarasota had 18 programs in the highest quartile, 23 in 3rd quartile. Janet stated that 2 of the local providers in the lowest quartile have already closed.
- Our county's low performing providers :the first year we had 51 providers with 10 low performing with one closing; 06-07 we had 72 providers with 12 low performing and the most recent year we had 76 providers, 12 low performing with 2 closed.
- Demographics of children with English as second language, disabilities and receiving free and reduced lunches with corresponding readiness rates

Mike Breton questioned if the programs that are the low performers are different programs or are they the same ones every year and if there is a consequence of being a repeater. Janet reported that there are a couple that are repeats and some that are new and if a site is a low performer for 2 years in a row they are required to use a curriculum approved by DOE, have a corrective action plan and complete an improvement plan. There are now providers statewide that have been low performing 3 years in a row and DOE is looking at consequences. The original consequence in legislation was that they would no longer be able to be a VPK provider. This is not a local decision, DOE must determine.

Janet also reported that there will be a process that will allow a provider to request a waiver due to debates around the issues involved with children being ready for school. Also, the Kindergarten screener does not show whether the child made progress in the year prior; it does not show the pre and the post which is a major issue. Hope Kinney agreed and commented that she is one that debates the testing; Children First's Orange Ave. site is an accredited site, is a 5 star quality site with degreed teachers and this year was a low performing provider. She stated that there are lots of different areas that need to be looked at: where are the children coming from, where are they when they come to us and the progression of ongoing progression.

Bill Little stated that looking at children with disabilities there is no significant differences. Janet stated that is true and DOE stresses that children with disabilities that do as well as their typically developing peers. It is the free and reduced lunches and English language learners that typically score low, with a higher percentage represented in the low performer providers.

Kathy Stuckey stated that when she was in Tallahassee she did talk to representatives about concerns that providers have given her which included that the screening is not looking at the whole picture of how children progress. Janet stated this issue is discussed at most meetings she attends.

Janet stated that discussions also include if using degreed teachers makes a difference as there is some recent push by some advocates to the legislature to require that all teachers must be degreed. The key is if teachers know what they are doing in the classroom, if they know how to work with a curriculum, the interaction they have with the children, if they doing lesson planning and intentional teaching. Some teachers with degrees cannot do that and some without degrees can and do.

b. Closing the '30 million word gap': Description of LEAF (Literacy Empowers All Families)

Janet Kahn stated she has talked about the LEAF program in her monthly reports but has not had a chance to show the Board the program. This program is all about "closing the 30 million word gap". The Community Foundation of Sarasota County funded this program last year as a new way of impacting a specific area; early literacy. They polled the community, had a partners meeting and had discussion on what would make an impact on early literacy. The community partners who were funded included the Coalition, Children First, the Library, and Sarasota County School Board. The community foundation agreed to fund several different initiatives that would impact children from infants up through middle school and focus on targeted zip codes.

The Coalition is involved with the social marketing campaign which is geared around closing the 30 million word gap. Other programs that were funded are the Imagination Library through the library system, that starts a foundation of reading for children; Head Start is working on parenting groups based on a national Head Start model and literacy based on Steps to Success, another national Head Start model as well as a summer camp for kids to try and help them keep their VPK skills until they enter school; and within the School district a reading campaign that involved all 6th grade students reading the same book, with lots of events around the book including having the author visit as well as some parent/teacher nights.

The Coalition's effort is based on a study that talks about the interaction and communication that an infant receives from birth and how that affects their vocabulary and ability to be ready for school. The key is the "extra talk" that families do with children involving more conversation, story telling, word playing, and chit chat. This made a significant difference in the number of words a child had heard by the time they entered Kindergarten. The most powerful association was in the extra talk and parental responsiveness not the poverty level of the families. By encouraging families to talk more and read more you really can close the 30 million word gap which is not 30 million different words but it is the repetition of words.

The social marketing campaign currently has panels inside and outside bus shelters, ads on 45 buses through out the county, and flyers in both English and Spanish that will be worked into a simple rack card that can be given out. There is a website that is available that includes parent activities and links to other sites for activities and there will be commercials and short videos as well.

Mike questioned that the marketing campaign seems to be related to the poor having more exposure than the general population but there is not correlation between incomes and asked what we are doing to expose everyone. Janet stated that the grant is written to target specific zip codes that were the more impoverished areas with lower early literacy skills, and where more intervention was needed to educate the parents, but that the marketing aspect is designed for everyone. The Coalition is distributing flyers at all outreach events as well as the partners.

Tami asked if ads have been placed in local magazines. Janet reported that will be done in the coming months as well as WEDU will be having spots showing the videos. Further discussion ensued regarding getting more local publications to advertise this campaign at free or reduced costs. Janet reported that WEDU has contacted Talaris Institute, another PBS entity, for permission to take several of their videos that show the local message for LEAF. WEDU will also be filming a video that will be available to for agencies and doctor's office to play in their waiting rooms etc.

Tami questioned how the campaign will be reaching illiterate parents and Janet responded that radio PSAs will be included in the next phase, outreach through community churches and discussion has come up on how to coordinate with the Literacy Council.. Hope Kinney spoke as to the great benefit to all the families in our community. Bill Little asked if the marketing materials were local and about the connection between LEAF and the Ready Set Grow calendar and if some of the same marketing pieces could be used. Discussion ensued regarding branding the theme within the calendar and other local initiatives. The Board was very complimentary of the materials.

5. CHAIR REPORT

a. Report on presentation to Venice Chamber Education committee meeting

Since Laura Benson was not present, Mike Breton provided the report of this meeting. He stated that Janet and Laura presented to the Educational Committee of the Venice Chamber and did a very good job. The Chamber has been looking for ways to make a more positive impact in the community and how they could help achieve objectives. The Committee was very impressed with the presentation and passion, had positive feedback and they now understand that there are things they can do within the

community to support child care. Janet stated that there was a lot of discussion about how to build childcare into economic development. Tami thanked Mike for the opportunity to talk to the Chamber

6. ACTION ITEMS

a. Approval of new private sector Board members

Tami stated that there are two potential new board members present and asked each to introduce themselves.

Amy Tuck Farrington stated that she is new to Sarasota, went to Florida Law School in Florida, has worked in the House of Representatives, Department of State and private practice and has experience with administration, lobbying, legislative issues, public records, and state budgets. She also is currently involved with the Government Issues Committee with the Sarasota Chamber as well as their Education Workforce committee.

John Stump stated he has 13 years of experience in banking with Regions Bank with a focus on businesses. He is also a Fathers in Families Workplace board member, wants to help promote economic development and he now has the time to commit to the Board since his young children are a little bit older. A couple of years ago his daughter participated in a VPK program.

Pauline Tracey reported that the nominating committee met earlier this week and again right before the Board meeting to review both applications and recommends approving both candidates. *This is a formal motion from the committee. There was no further discussion. Motion passed.*

Tami officially welcomed both Amy and John to the Board.

b. Approval of Fee schedule to match new FPL income levels (Note: required process each year to update chart with the new income levels and recalculate parent fees accordingly)

Janet reported that there is not a lot of leeway for this schedule; every year the income levels are updated based on the Federal Poverty Levels, the state send the Coalition the chart and then the fees must be determined. James reported that each category was looked at and staff tried to keep the parent fees to as close to the requirement that they be no more than 10% of the Annual Gross Income as possible without going over that amount. Most categories are around 9.5% to 9.82%. A waiver from AWI is required if a Coalition has fees over the 10%. This is updated yearly locally and sent on to AWI as an update to the Plan. The new fees and income level would be effective July 1, 2009.

Motion to approve the proposed Fee Schedule from July 1, 2009 through June 2010 was made by Chris Kofler and seconded by Pauline Tracey. Motion approved.

7. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT

Tami stated that everyone received this report by email. She noted that the waiting list number is getting high. Janet reported that this number is even higher now. Tami asked if we are turning many families away that just missed the income cut off. Janet reported that everyone is currently on the wait list meets the income eligibility per self report but that we do try and capture data on those who are not eligible. Linda Mason reported that for most families that are coming in this is not an issue with so many people having lost jobs or had hours reduced. Janet also reported that VPK registration is going very well with over 600 registered as of today which is a little ahead of where we were last year. Summer enrollment is also happening but numbers for summer are always much lower. Janet also reported again that intake is closed but James will be submitting a request to AWI for additional funds to cover the surge in mandated referrals that have outpaced terminations.

8. DISCUSSION ITEM/ NEW BUSINESS .

a. Legislative issues

Janet reported that the Bill to reduce Early Learning Coalitions from 31 to 20 state wide went through one committee but hasn't moved any further. There has been lots of discussion at the State level that if Coalitions merge funds will automatically be saved. This is not looking at the impact of the systems and the services to the families and children at the local level. Mike reported that there has been a lot of talk about the government's new stimulus packet and asked if anything has come of this locally. Janet

reported that funds for child care are coming, AWI has issued posting that they finally got guidance and the money is coming down to the local level but we do not yet know how much. Head Start money is separate and some funds will be competitive and some will come automatically to Head Start programs. Hope Kinney confirmed this and reported that Early Head Start and Head Start will be expanding by 40 children each. Janet reported that there are funds to reportedly cover approximately 20,000 new child care slots across the state coming with the stimulus dollars, however the stimulus funds will be used to cover non recurring funds that will be lost, so the actual amount may be much smaller. There are some quality dollars coming as well but most of those will be held at the state and utilized for statewide projects. More details will be coming soon.

Janet also reported that there is Kidcare legislation that has moved and another legislative piece that would have the VPK FTE calculated differently in regards to absences which will be helpful in simplifying things. Once the session is over, a full accounting of all bills that impact early learning and young children can be provided.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Randee Tolbert stated that Family Childcare Providers have been complaining to her regarding the mini grant process this year. Janet stated Randee should encourage any provider to bring concerns directly to Coalition staff and explained that there was a competitive bid process this year that resulted in a change in vendor, but the staff need to know of problems so they can be addressed with the vendor.

9. OLD BUSINESS:

a. AWI Monitoring Report and Response

Tami stated that Janet has prepared the Coalition's response to the monitoring which was included in Board member packets, many things that were noted as not in compliance were in compliance even by the time the monitors left and most were very minor. Janet reported that the curriculum use was the major issue noted and AWI indicate that the Coalition is responsible for ensuring providers use appropriate curriculum, period. The Coalition has been working with the providers to come into compliance with this over the years with a number of trainings, TA, coaching etc. The Coalition's corrective action response to this finding will be to now submit a plan amendment that will allow the ELC to remove School Readiness children from sites that remain out of compliance with curriculum use, despite Coalition support to address this. The Coalition already has in place policies that will support this action but we have been reluctant to carry this out due to trying to work with the providers and families needs.

Bill Little asked for an explanation of table Three which has the number of CRR referrals and % based on population. He initially thought that this was a performance issue but then saw that it was not mentioned in the body of the report. Janet stated that she went back and forth on this table with AWI. This table shows the number of referrals made, and then shows the population of children under age 18, in each of three counties. Janet explained that she wanted the funding level also put into this chart due to the fact that the two Coalitions used as comparison to ours have significantly more funding overall and should be able to do more referrals. Janet requested this change from AWI but was initially told that they could not fix this on the report because they had not done it for other Coalitions and it was for informational comparison purposes only. She will pursue this again based on the Board comments.

Janet stated that AWI often distributes general reports that show the number of children served and the Coalition's population. Again, Janet questioned these comparisons and finally got AWI to add not only the total budget but also the number *served by age group* because school age children cost significantly less than younger children and therefore Coalitions that still use 1/3 of their budget for school age care will be able to serve more children as a total number. Janet reported that if the state were to get additionally funding and implement their new funding formula, Sarasota should receive an additional \$500,000 based on current data in our county. The current funding formula is based on School Readiness in 1999 and Sarasota's population and demographics have changed significantly since then.

Amy stated that she went to the AWI website and looked at other reports. We had significantly less compliance issues, and ours were minor. There were others with much more concerning items than

ours. It was commented that despite our overall positive report, our strengths were not noted as there were for others. Janet is going to inquire about this.

b. Retreat plans

Tami asked the Board to consider an extended May meeting with the possibility of bringing in a facilitator to discuss our mission, additional activities we could be doing to get our mission out, and serving the entire community related to early learning and not just the School Readiness and VPK parents. The Board agreed. Discussion ensued regarding times and the possibility of a different place. The time of the meeting was determined to start at 5:00. Kathy Stuckey and Hope Kinney had previously volunteered for a committee to discuss with the facilitator.

10. FINANCE Report.

James reported that Administrative costs are well within the budget and earmarks; we will be looking at submitting a letter to AWI to request more School Readiness funds within the week; VPK enrollment is running ahead of what was projected and that state will work with all Coalitions to ensure that all of the needs will be met. School readiness is looking like we will be over by \$200 - \$250,000 due to the higher number of mandated referrals served in recent months.

11. ANNOUNCEMENTS.

a. United Way Women's Initiative Event

Tami announced an event that is being sponsored by the Woman's Initiative of the United Way focusing on how to get the buy in from the business community for needs in early child care. Tami reported that the United Way has established an emergency children's fund because with so many families losing jobs and income the children are really suffering. The event will have business leaders talking about the impact and importance for good quality child care for their businesses and how it relates to their specific business. The event will be April 30th, 5:30 at the community room at Northern Trust. Janet will also be there to talk about what the Coalition does within the community. There is also a morning event on 5/1 that will focus more on the agencies and what they provide.

Janet reminded everyone that the Board is still looking for a new chair. Janet and Pauline met with Steve Queior from the Sarasota Chamber and he is going to look at some of his previous chairs and current members for suggestions. Tami will put in her application and has agreed to step in on a temporary basis.

Janet mentioned that Laura still needs to complete her performance evaluation before completing her term. Chris stated that he wants the minutes to reflect that the Board is behind in completing Janet's performance evaluation as mandated in the bylaws and our procedures; he would like to have this done to recognize the good work that Janet has done. Tami suggested a small committee form to get together and complete an evaluation, look at appropriate compensation, and possibly solicit input from the community. Subcommittee formed and includes Chris, David & Pauline.

Kathy Stuckey asked that Hope Kinney report on a recent award received by our local Head Start program. Hope reported that Head Start has received the Program of Excellence; one of only 22 in the nation.

12. ADJOURNMENT.

Meeting adjourned at 7:24 pm. *Next Board of Directors meeting was been changed to May 19^t*