

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 – February 17, 2010

MINUTES

1. ATTENDANCE

a. Voting Members Present:

Mike Breton	David Hicks	Chris Kofler
Janice Mee	Tami Conetta	John Stump
Pauline Tracy	Cheryl Williams	Jill Jacoby
Amy Tuck-Farrington		

b. Non-Voting Members Present:

Lisa Williams	Connie Snyder	Hope Kinney
Sonia Figaredo-Alberts		

c. Absent (Voting):

Steve Spangler	Laura Bauman	Kathryn Stuckey
Nicole Parker	Bill Little	

d. Absent (Non-Voting):

Judy Corso

e. Staff:

Janet Kahn	James Pawlak	Mary Wolf
Linda Mason	Valerie Walton	

f. Visitors:

Randee Tolbert	Jennifer Ourednik
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2. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:05. Tami Conetta welcomed everyone.

3. CONSENT AGENDA

Tami asked for a motion to approve the consent agenda. Chris Kofler made a motion to approve the consent agenda. Pauline Tracy seconded. No comments. Motion passed.

4. CHAIR REPORT

Tami reported that she will be going to Tallahassee the first week of March for the next ELAC meeting. A flyer from ELAC was passed out to members that came from the state committee that could be very helpful when talking to anyone that may have some influence in our funding concerns and what the priorities are. There is a legislative phone conference on Friday that Tami will not be able to attend but Janet and Amy will participate and will bring the board up to date on what bills have been filed and see what the general temperature is in Tallahassee regarding our funding requests.

Tami and Janet met last week and talked about our strategic direction and Tami will be reaching out to members to see if you will work on a small committee to try and come up with general priorities. Then we will see how the rest of the board fits into the plan.

Tami reported that she will be sending to all local chamber of commerce that talks about who we are, what we do, how we work with the business community and extends an invitation to have someone from ELC come speak with one of their groups.

5. PRESENTATION: Local FKLRS results

Janet presented a power point presentation on the school readiness rates. Rates are determined using what is called the Florida Kindergarten Readiness Screener (FLKRS), which has two components. There were some changes this year in the literacy measure.

The first component is a basic child development screener called ECHOS (early child observation system) and the second component is a new reading screener called FAIR (Florida Assessment for Instruction in Reading). They have done away with the DIBELS and the FAIR is based on new research was done by the Florida Reading Institute. ECHOS is aligned with the performance standards and it is using 19 items out of a much larger tool and does measure approaches to learning; social emotional; language / communication; emergent literacy. The FAIR is determined now to provide a probability of reading success. It still measures the same two areas that the DIBELS had which is letter naming and phonemic awareness and it also tests listening comprehension and vocabulary but that portion is not factored into the readiness rates, it is used for diagnostic and instructional purposes.

For the ECHOS they use the terms “demonstrating” skills in a particular area, or “emerging/ progressing” or no evidence. To be considered “ready for Kindergarten” on the ECHOS, the first two scores are combined. In the FAIR component, there are three tiers of “probability of reading success status” and a score of .67 is considered acceptable.

Readiness rates for Sarasota County: 2849 children were screened and the percent demonstrating skills is 49%; those emerging/progressing is 43%; those not demonstrating was 8%. If you combine the first two it shows that 92% of the children were ready. Last year our local rate for Sarasota was 89.9%. As a comparison, statewide the percentages were 47% demonstrating; 42% emerging/progressing and 11% not demonstrating, or 89% are considered ready across the state..

FAIR results are in the two components that they then combined to come up with three tiers which is predictive of reading success. You want as many children to be in the 67 to 99 percent range as possible. In Sarasota County, 72% are in that level. Statewide it was 65%.

VPK Readiness Rates last year were based on a highest possible score of 300. This year it is based on 200 and it is always a moving target. They combine the two sets of scores from the ECHOS and the FAIR and they come up with the rate. Because there is a rule that says no more than 15% of providers can be a low performer each year there is a different cut off point. This year it is 138. This year we do have 5 low performers. We did have 6 but one site has since closed. This is our lowest number so far.

The break out for our provider is:

179 - 200 = 31
158 – 178 = 30
139 – 157 = 21
138 or below =5

Tami asked about what we are going to do to work with those 5 low performers and those sites that we have been so focused on, have they moved up? Janet reported that several have moved up after receiving support and others have worked on areas of improvement themselves. The sites that haven't moved up we will still work with them. She also reminded the Board that there are a number of variables to look at when analyzing the issues. It is not always a direct measure of the quality of the program. There are number of variables that go into the scoring including every year there is a different cohort of children, there are multiple issues that children face that will impact their ability to score well

on such standardized tests, there might be issues with a particular teacher that needs more strengthening in certain areas.

Mike Breton asked if the 5 low performers are the same sites from last year. Janet reported 2 of the sites are repeat low performers, 3 are new to this category and the other LLP's from last year have moved up or are no longer in business. We are mandated to work with the LLP if they accept the help. Tami asked at what point is it no longer appropriate to send our kids there. Janet replied that DOE has a rule that if you are a LLP for 4 years in a row there is the consequence of not being allowed to offer VPK any longer. If you are a LLP for two years in a row you have to purchase a specific curriculum configuration that DOE approves. Sites have to write improvement plans that are entered onto the DOE website and the ELC has to approve them. There is a very specific process that is followed.

Hope Kinney stated that Orange Ave has been a LLP for two years, even though it is a NAEYC accredited school, have degreed teachers in early childhood, and already had a curriculum in place. They were a LLP last year and did the improvement plan. She further stated that with Head Start there are already a lot of requirements in place. They also participate in the Look for the Stars program and were a 5 star the first year and a 3 star the next year. She thinks there are other variables here based on 100% of their children fall below the poverty guideline and they have a lot of different issues they are working on with the children. Hope further commented that they are working with the ELC to talk with Kindergarten teachers to see what they want and what can make the transition smoother. At Orange Ave, 60% of the children there are Spanish speaking and their families are Spanish speaking so there are a lot of different variables that need to be considered in the assessment tool. Mike Breton asked if the children can be assessed in Spanish. Janet stated that DOE does not currently do this.

Jennifer Ourednik pointed out that the assessments do not measure or note where the children started from and is not looking at a level of improvement. Janet agreed and stated that this is an important issue that is continually discussed at the state level. There should be a way to measure progress which is critical to look at

Lisa Williams stated that attendance is a key factor as well. If children miss a lot of VPK or they come in late or leave early they are not getting the information or the experience as other students. She stated that some of the parents she has right now are missing school more often and every year is different depending on the group of children attending.

Hope said that another factor that they did research on through the LEAF project was the gap of skills when they come to the site and also the retention loss for many during summer. They leave in May and are evaluated in September, or 30 days into the school year. That's one reason they work within the LEAF summer camp program with the VPK children as well as those who did not get VPK so that they can retain gains made throughout the summer. Tami suggested that maybe we should be looking at some kind of summer gap reading program on a broader basis.

Hope then shared a story with the board of a girl that went through VPK, was doing very well, could write her name, and could write all the letters. She went to Kindergarten and scored very poorly on the test, the teacher said she's not ready and she's having a terrible time at school. But by January, she got the most improved in her class. Hope said the point being that there is a huge transition going into Kindergarten and sometimes the children need time so testing will not accurately reflect things.

Mary Wolf stated that VPK is trying to develop an assessment that providers could use themselves that would be benchmarked and allow them to track growth over the course of the VPK year. Janet stated this is also a good reason why providers should be conducting age and culturally appropriate assessments throughout their program so that they know what's happening with the children and they can adjust accordingly as well as make changes for the following year. That is what is recommended.

Janice Mee asked if there has been any discussion at the state level about conducting the assessment in Spanish. Janet reported that there has and that the DIBELS was done in Spanish but FAIRS is not yet conducted in Spanish. There have been discussions and an ongoing debate statewide about whether FLKRS truly measures school readiness, what are the best tools to use, is it appropriate as a high stake assessment, etc. Receipt of future stimulus statewide grants may be contingent on resolving these issues and concerns.

Mike Breton asked what happens if a child is evaluated below the readiness rate, what does this mean and what is the consequence of having a poor readiness rate? Janet stated that this would mean that Kindergarten teachers would have to structure their program to individualize additional attention and focus for those children but it could potentially mean the child would stay behind and they could also be potentially at risk for staying behind as well as reading failure throughout elementary school.

Lisa Williams stated that children that are home schooled or go to private school often do not get assessed. Janet stated that they are supposed to. Lisa stated that their school brings the children to get tested but has been told that the majority of children in home school or private Kindergarten do not get tested. Janet stated that this means that some children are not included in the sample, the sample is lower and some people do not even get a rate due to not having enough children assessed. It is not a perfect system. Jennifer Ourednik stated that she talked to her daughter's Kindergarten teacher about her report card and some benchmarks that are no longer being measured. The teacher said that there are almost 500 benchmarks for kindergarten students and they decided not to measure some and those will just have a star on the report card.

6. WORKGROUP REPORT

a. Legislative/Communication Workgroup Report

Amy Farrington reported that Senator Wise bill, which is very similar to his one last year, is one that we will need to be on top of. Janet said the Wise bill is toned down a little from last year, it does not call for a reduction in Coalitions but it does have a requirement to serve 2000 children which is from 5 years ago and is a meaningless threshold. Wise is the chair of appropriations for this in the Senate and they have a three hour workgroup today on program effectiveness and consolidation of state agencies.

Amy also reported that the Legislature many times asks state agencies to weigh in on funding concerns and they asked AWI to come in and give different scenarios on how the school readiness program would be affected if the general revenue is reduced, and particularly if it was reduced to the extent that the federal draw down funds would also be lost.

On the spreadsheet that the state sent out, they looked at it by how many children would be cut out of the program. If any of this happens, it ranged from 37 to 231 children in Sarasota. The point being is that there is a certain threshold that they can take out in general revenue and it impacts the federal draw down that's why the spreadsheets go from a 20 million reduction to 50 million because 50 million represents if you lose all of your federal dollars. There is a potential increase for funding that comes down from the federal government for school readiness so we could lose out on existing funding as well as new funding. Florida because of population increases would be eligible for a chunk of funding. Those are the talking points. Janet will send the chart specific to Sarasota to the rest of the Board.

The other thing that may be of interest is Senate bill 848 which goes to professional credentialing requirements for teachers in early learning. Janet stated there is also a bill that would require background screening be in place before teachers can be in the classroom. Jill said that there are ways to help with this like live scan that can electronically be done and get results back from FDLE within two days and FBI under two weeks.

Mike said he was in Tallahassee in January for the health care reform that had representatives from the governor's office and the budget. They were talking about the issue for FL being that we are 1.8 billion

dollars short for revenue right now and have no idea on how to get this. And we are losing population not gaining. Janet stated that we had a net increase in population since the original allocation of school readiness money. In our case our allocation is based on 1999 data and it was never increased. If an increase were to come through and there was money we would be eligible for as much as \$500,000 increase based on some of the funding formulas. If the federal government passed on new funds for school readiness programs, maybe we've lost population now but we are still higher than the original allocations from 1999.

Mike also stated that due to the 2010 census, numbers will more than likely change. In addition the point that they were driving in Tallahassee was that depending on how they define the poverty level, at 1.5 times the federal poverty level the state would have been required to spend in various programs an additional 1.2 billion dollars but if it went to 200% of the FPL the state would have been required to spent 3.2 billion dollars which would have tripled the deficit. The consensus was they are completely at a loss of what to do. Janet stated that this may be why they have not released the updated federal poverty level guidelines which they normally do by now.

7. PUBLIC COMMENT:

Randee Tolbert commented that the ELC annual provider conference this year was very good and she has heard good feedback overall. She also wanted to thank the Coalition in advance for sponsoring family child care providers for their upcoming conference in June. In the newsletter it states that this will be sponsored again this year. Janet confirmed this.

8. ACTION ITEMS:

a. Board resolution to continue our credit line:

Tami stated that we currently have a \$400,000 line of credit with Wacovia/Wells Fargo. We have a zero balance which is usually what we carry on it and it is there just as a back stop because occasionally we need to have something to cover shortfalls on our provider payments while waiting for reimbursement from the state. As soon as the payment is received, we pay it off and we are good again. Because it is up for renewal and because of the merge of Wachovia and Wells Fargo, we need a board resolution to renew the line of \$400,000. John Stump asked what the current interest rate is, it is prime plus 1.3%, which John commented was reasonable.

Mike Breton asked what triggers the decision to use the line of credit. James said it would normally happen usually only in October due to that being the first full month of VPK slot payments and us not having enough advance to cover it.. Between the time we pay the pay the providers and then invoice it to the state, it takes about a week for the state to reimburse us for the money. So we have only used it very sparingly. Janet stated we have also used it before in July when the state has asked us to pay back our prior fiscal year advance and before we received our new advance. AWI has gotten much faster with payments, but we still need to know that it is available if needed.

Mike asked what the protocol to use this is. Janet reported that Eric, our accountant, lets us know our cash flow is low and he comes up with an amount that we will need. The process is that Janet would email Tami and all the Board officers saying Eric advised us to draw down a certain amount, and what the reason is, and obtain written approval via e-mail. Then once approved, there is a written form that has to be submitted and is faxed to the bank.

John Stump asked if there is a fee that the bank charges to renew the line of credit.. Tami stated it is \$250 and the terms of the note look pretty fair to her. It is a yearly renewal. The original was in 2004 and required a lot more paperwork. It was then just automatically renewed. When Wells Fargo took over, it may be that everything has to be done differently now and this year they are requiring confirmation that the board has approved it. Tami has a certificate of resolution to borrow and asked for a motion to approve the extension of our line of credit and authority for Janet and herself to sign. Janice Mee made the motion, Pauline Tracy seconded. No further discussion. Motion approved.

9. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT

Janet reported she sent out a written report prior to the meeting. She wanted to highlight the provider conference which was very exciting. It was an experimental theme, which overall was well received. It was focused on the teacher who was then to bring back to their classroom the experience. We had 440 attending and with all the staff there were 475. Janet thanked Pine View School and the School District for allowing us to use Pine View which was a great location.

One other thing that she did not get onto her written report was that Amy Meese, who is a county manager, is very interested in the greening of child care and has asked to work with us on this. We will be hosting a meeting with her with the providers to explore interest and then from there develop a plan.

10. OLD BUSINESS:

Fiscal Agent for another organization:

Community Youth Development (CYD) proposal was further investigated as the Board instructed. The issue is that in order for CYD to be linked with us and under our non profit umbrella our missions have to be very much aligned. Our missions are complimentary but not aligned. What that means in terms of the IRS is that they look at this unfavorably and that you may just be trying to get around tax laws. For us, this would have jeopardized our 501(c) 3 status. CYD is now officially pursuing getting their own 501(c) 3 and they are asking us and will bring a formal proposal at a later date to assist them on a technical assistant basis, which you are allowed to do, to assist with fiscal processes. That way there is no risk to us and it would save them money on not having to have an in house fiscal department. CYD will come back with a formal letter of request that the board will vote on which will probably happen in a couple of months.

Provider Rate Increase Request:

James passed out handouts and Tami reminded the board that staff was asked to provide information well in advance for review. This will not be discussed and voted on until the next Board meeting. The handout will give the general parameters of what it would cost to bring different levels of provider payments, whether they are serving infant, toddlers or preschoolers, up closer to the community market rates. Janet stated the information it is based on the market rate study conducted by the state. Locally a Coalition can pay up to the 75th percentile and the proposed rate increase would bring us up to the current market rates. If anyone has questions please email to Janet so additional information can be brought to the next meeting.

11. FINANCE Report:

James Pawlak presented the finance report stating that overall through January for School Readiness, Admin and Non Direct were at \$35,000 surplus the budget. December through January we pretty much came out within a couple thousand dollars of what he forecasted for the whole month. Not much changed within any categories. Quality is slightly over budget with \$456,000 projected vs. \$451,000. In Gold Seal we are under budget. We had budgeted \$120,000 and as of right now we look to come in at \$107,000 as there are less sites renewing their GS status at this point. In the Infant and toddler category we need to meet the mandated minimum \$56,000 threshold and we are on pace to be spending close to \$70,000. CCRR the grant earmark is \$101,000; we budgeted \$105,000 and we are looking at \$117,000 to spend for this fiscal year. Child care slots: we need to spend 70% of our base allocation which \$3,516,000; we've spent \$2,000,000 to date and we are at 70%. We continue to bring in new children slowly and we have 5 months left in this fiscal year and we need to average \$300,000 in payments per month. In January we spent \$294,000, but we need to account for attrition and to keep at our minimum thresholds.

ARRA funds: James forecasted spending \$38,000 monthly and we spent \$38,002. We should be spending between \$38,000 and \$40,000 in February.

In terms of the waitlist, the numbers are basically the same as last month but we have just sent out a letter to another 200 children, so we are at 283.

For VPK we got some good news in terms of the \$350,000 that was moved to the ARRA VPK category. The state has informed us that they wanted us to use the whole allocation for VPK ARRA with this invoice. James was almost able to do this. We had \$480,000 for VPK slot payments which was totally invoiced under the VPK ARRA. We now only have left \$30,702 and all of that will be invoiced next month to zero out that grant. He reminded the board that those funds had originally been earmarked for school based VPK programs only, and we do not have school based VPK programs so we had not been able to use those funds up to now. He reviewed the rest of the VPK numbers on the chart. Coming into our 2011 fiscal year our projected VPK carry over deficit at this point is approximately \$25,000.

At this point James is not sure if we will need to request any additional funds and we have another month to really see what we need. We can ask for the carry over deficit which was \$88,000 from prior year, if we need it.. We may need to look at flipping some children from ARRA to BG8 to ensure we hit our 70% threshold in School Readiness. Janet stated we are trying to save our ARRA dollars, while still meeting our minimum thresholds for the ARRA grant, to account for the potential for any further budget cuts that we will likely get.

12. ANNOUNCEMENTS.

None

13. ADJOURNMENT.

Meeting adjourned at 7:04 p.m. Next meeting will be March 17th.