

**EARLY LEARNING COALITION OF SARASOTA COUNTY
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT, TRAINING and QUALITY COMMITTEE**
(revised committee name)

**Joint meeting of the former Staff Development and Training Committee
and Quality Initiative Committee**

The Landings, 1960 Landings Boulevard, Sarasota
Blue Awning Building, Room 219

August 20, 2007

MINUTES

ATTENDEES

Elma McKay
Kerri Deiffenwierth
Kathleen Sullivan
Jill Jacoby
Tynisha Wynder

Janet Kahn
Dianne Rose
Kathie DiPinto
Virginia Myers
Malikah Daffin

Venise Duchesne
Jackie Fontaine
Sandy Zook
Carolyn Huber

CALL TO ORDER.

The meeting was called to order by the Co-Chairperson Elma McKay at 9:36 a.m.

- Janet announced that Mary was not at the meeting due to a last minute VPK emergency situation that she is handling. The state issued a legal clarification late Friday afternoon on the background screening issue for VPK instructors and 27 classes may not be able to start without having received background screenings clearance letters that are current within five years. Directors have until the end of the day to reshuffle classrooms in order to be in compliance, if they are not in compliance, their VPK start date will have to be moved back.
- Dr. Myers handed out flyers regarding a “Violence in Schools” symposium that will take place at Keiser University on September 11, 2007.
- Tynisha introduced Malikah when she arrived as the newest member of the FCCFD team.

OLD BUSINESS.

- **QRS update-** Janet announced that the Gulf Coast Community Foundation of Venice challenge grant is contingent on all matching funds and partners being obtained before they will release the funds for the QRS. Currently the Coalition is waiting to hear whether Sarasota County will grant any portion of the money requested through the Human Services funding process. Other grant requests are also still pending. If the County does not grant any funds, the Coalition will still move forward with a small pilot project. Lynn Reichman is currently conducting a telephone survey of all the centers regarding QRS to determine what centers know about the QRS, and then informing those who don’t know of what it is, and asking centers if they are interested in participating.
- **DECA update-**
 - Kathleen reported that the DECA sub-committee met twice. There was a retreat in June which the group discussed the philosophy of the DECA program and the implementation of DECA in the community. The second meeting was in July and the committee discussed how they would like to implement DECA. The committee agreed that a two level training series for the DECA would be the best way of introducing the program to teachers. Level one will be provided by SCTI and will be a foundational level of training in DECA. The fall will focus on 3-4 year olds. The mentors hope to receive training in January on the new DECA for infant and toddler, so the spring will shift the focus of trainings to infants and toddlers. Level 2 will be offered by the Florida Center and will focus more on strategies for working with difficult children through their

Building Better Behaviors training series. This tiered system will require SCTI and Florida Center mentors to be in contact throughout the year, discussing progress and concerns with centers that both mentor. The Florida Center will continue their workshop style trainings.

- Janet asked for clarification on what the SCTI trainings were going to cover. The Coalition's goal is to reintroduce the full DECA program to the community this year. Kathleen responded that the full DECA program will be incorporated with many of the sites that the mentors work with and through the FCCFD staff's work with providers, but that the group feels that the community could benefit from trainings that really address the DECA reflective checklists as that will address the DECA system, at the universal level, that of the classroom environment.
- Teachers are sometimes confused by the reflective checklist and it is not always accurate. Teachers often assume that something is in place or in process when it really is not upon further review. It is important for the checklist to be very clear because it is what the mentors use to create their Quality Improvement Plans for each classroom. The committee agreed working with the checklist, cross referencing it with other tools, and spelling out specific examples of what each of the items means would create a more user friendly way of evaluating classroom environments. Currently the DECA checklist only has two options, either "yes" an item is in place or "not yet" an item is not in place. If a teacher checks yes on something, it is harder for the mentor to come in and show how improvement can be made.
- Tynisha stated that an example of the problem encountered by mentors is for one of the items the questions reads, "Is there a schedule in place?" The way the DECA checklist is set up a teacher will read that and have the option to check "Yes" or "Not Yet." The class may have a schedule that is not posted, but followed every day, so the teacher will mark "In Place". The Florida Center has broken down the checklist to make it more user- friendly. They use a five tiered system, 1 being not in place, 5 being completely appropriate and in place. So for the same question the teacher will now have five options: 1. no schedule; 2. written schedule, but not followed; 3. written schedule and followed; 4. picture schedule and written schedule not referred to; 5. picture schedule and written schedule referred to. This makes evaluating classrooms clearer to the teachers and with the post assessment tracking improvement is much clearer for the teachers and mentors to see, and data gathering. The checklist is the lowest level of assessment; it is done by the teacher and only assesses the environment. It is very effective to show the teacher there are things they can be doing to improve the environment and implement positive change for the children.
- After the checklist is completed, then the DECA assessment can be used to evaluate individual children. The DECA committee envisions beginning DECA on a small scale, beginning with foundational implementation, and then it will ripple out to more centers and more in depth discussion. The most important part of implementing DECA is ensuring teachers are shown how to correctly assess, evaluate and recognize progress.
- Janet agreed that this could be very beneficial especially for those teachers who do not know how to effectively create appropriate classrooms. But she also encouraged the sub-committee members to discuss their concerns with the checklist with Devereux, as we cannot be the only committee who has struggled with the issue. Perhaps another group has already done something similar that we can use. Janet also reminded the group to utilize the classroom strategies book that is part of the DECA system as some of this is addressed within that resource as well.
- The next meeting of the subgroup will be on August 30.
- **STAR Update-** The Substitute Training and recruitment Program (STAR) just renewed center contracts for the new fiscal year (July 2007- June 2008), and the program is up to 14 sites participating. The program uses a tiered system for providers, and each center has a contract for the number of substitute days they can use. This year a lower tier was added 24 substitute days for \$250 to make is easier for providers to afford the program. Centers can move up through the tiers

throughout the year as they use more substitute days. It is a great opportunity for centers to also find permanent teacher placement. There were over 500 substitute days used since the program was implemented in November. Dr. Myers trains the substitutes before they step foot in the classroom, and that training was just revamped. An hour was added to the training, and more hands on activities and lesson planning was added. Some substitutes are interested in making this a full time career and others enjoy the flexibility.

Janet stated that the Coalition plans to look at how the STAR model can be used as a basis for a centralized recruitment program for recruiting permanent teachers for all child care sites within the community. This is an area that will be explored further in the coming year. CF is looking at this for their sites and we will see how it can be coordinated, and also include the CDA training component as well.

NEW BUSINESS.

- **Continued discussion of ELC Training Plan for July 2007- June 2008 and coordination of trainings among organizations-**
 - Kathleen has agreed to add ESOL training for providers. VPK providers are concerned with this area because the readiness rates are determined by children knowing 8 letters and their ability to recognize beginning sounds. They believe that their ESOL children may not know this, which is not necessarily true. It is also important for teachers to encourage parents to speak the language they are most comfortable with at home, not forcing parents or children to speak English. The Coalition will add a flyer with tips and suggestions about teaching children of other languages to one of the Coalition's newsletter that will mention when the ESOL training will be offered, and Kathleen will coordinate this handout. Kerri also suggested adding a basic Spanish for child care providers to communicate with children and parents.
 - Assessment Trainings also need to inform providers that there are many assessments that are appropriate, and it is important to assess children at all ages. Janet stated there are two issues with assessments. The first issue is that the state requires a random sample of pre-/post- assessments on all ages. So the Coalition will have to present training on that tool. Dr. Myers added that some children last year did not do as well on their post assessments because the teachers understood the assessment tool much better by the end of the process last year because of training provided. The second issue is that because if Coalition trains only on the tool, sometimes the message of the importance of using assessment on ALL children is lost in the trainings. It was suggested to have as many of the same children additionally included with the required random sample this year. It would allow the Coalition to draw some community conclusions from the sample.
 - Dianne is continuing her VPK Standards trainings, but they will now be offered only once each quarter. She is also doing three part lesson planning training by appointment in the Resource Room.

Training for Low Performing VPK providers: Dr. Myers and Kerri both did full day workshops through a grant from the Department of Education to work with VPK providers who were considered low performing based on readiness rates. Dr. Myers focused on literacy, and Kerri focused on environment. Both presenters felt having the full day each with the teachers really helped the teachers to understand the importance of literacy and environment. The format also helped teachers to identify positive things they were already doing in their classroom, but did not realize it, and helped them build on these activities to make them more appropriate. The training was very well received by the teachers who participated.

- **ELC VPK training as model for boot camp for new teachers-** The group has previously discussed the idea of a boot camp for new teachers. Kerri and Dr. Myers both felt that the training that was done for the Low Performing providers could be a model for the boot camp that had been discussed last spring by the committee. The training would need to be tweaked for infant and toddler teachers.
- **Training focus for the year-** Very simply stated by Janet the training focus for this year is “Back to the Basics.” With lesson planning, assessments, DECA and new teacher training the focus is helping teachers with the essentials- environment and basic guidance.

OTHER DISCUSSION.

- The committee then led into a discussion about the confusion with the name change for the various child care professional certificates, replacing the CDA. The acronyms are confusing and the requirements for each seem confusing.
- In addition, the group mentioned how there are new requirements for the those centers pursuing NAEYC accreditation and which of the various designations meet the NAEYC criteria. In addition the new NAEYC criteria does call for increased education. By 2011 100% of teachers need to have an Associates degree. By 2012 100% need to have a minimum of a Bachelor’s Degree. Directors must also submit annual reports showing efforts to moving toward these requirements, not plans, but transcripts and proof that the center employees are pursuing higher education goals. Kerri also pointed out that the Florida director’s credential is not recognized by NAEYC. Jill said that NAEYC is moving towards recognizing it in the near future.
- Venise suggested (and it was well received) to repeat a session from the Annual Conference from two years ago. Part 1 would address 40 hour training; part 2 presented by MCC and SCTI for CDA (ECPPC) and Associate programs.
- It was also agreed in order to clarify the new terminology that a flow chart of the various certificates would be helpful. A group would stay after the September meeting to discuss this issue more fully. Another confusing issue is the DOE verses the DCF credentials, both how they are similar, how they are different, and how they can be credited toward other certifications. Kathleen announced that they have also changed the CDA curriculum. In addition to this, the SCTI CDA can count towards 12 hours of an Associates Degree at MCC. Various members of the group will contact their state and national contacts and bring this information to the next session.
- Dr. Myers informed the group that there are seven work groups working to align everything by the Spring 2008, and Dr. Myers is sitting on one of these groups.
- **Committee name change to indicate that issues formerly dealt with by the Quality Initiative Committee are now included in the PD&T Committee-** Committee needs to change the name to reflect that is also is discussing quality initiatives in the committee. The committee agreed to defer to the Coalition staff to change the name to include quality. *(Note: The new name will be Professional Development, Training and Quality Committee)*

ANNOUNCEMENTS.

No announcements.

ADJOURNMENT.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:24am. The next meeting will be on Monday, September 24, 2007 at 9:30 am at The Landings.

Sandy Zook