



Early Learning Coalition of Sarasota County
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT, TRAINING & QUALITY
COMMITTEE MEETING

The Landings, Blue Awning
Monday, February 23, 2009

MINUTES

ATTENDEES		
Mary Wolf	Jackie Fontaine	Debbie Bowler
Marjorie Fondacaro	Elma J. McKay	Kathleen Sullivan
Janet Kahn	Venise Duchesne	Wendy Harris
Dr. Goldstein	Dianne Lawrence	Valerie Walton
Kathy Stuckey	Gary LaFemina	Eva Balcar

1. CALL TO ORDER

Meeting was called to order at 10:10 a.m. by Kathleen Sullivan.

2. OLD BUSINESS

Mary Wolf reported that the sign in sheet from the December 15th meeting is being recreated and passed around for anyone that attended to sign. Minutes from the December 15, 2008 meeting were reviewed with no concerns voiced.

8th Annual ELC Conference

Mary gave an update from the conference, reporting that there were 357 attendees, up from last year; with 385 in attendance when you count the presenters. The number of family providers was also the largest ever to attend the conference. The summary of the responses from the evaluations were distributed. Overall, attendees thought the conference was excellent. Kathy Stuckey requested to see the maximum number of occupancy per room versus the number that attended each session. Since the breakout attendance was capped at the room capacity it appears that most sessions were close to capacity, with the exception of the Learning Station in the sanctuary (below capacity) and yoga in the meditation chapel (above capacity).

A consideration for next year is that Pine Shores notified the Coalition that the sanctuary would no longer be available for the conference – Pine Shores has instated a policy that the sanctuary should not be used by outside groups. As a result the Coalition will be looking into other venues for next year and Committee members were asked to let the Coalition know if they have any ideas for possible locations.

Two popular sessions were the ERS Tips for Success training and the Yoga training. The ERS Tips for Success will be repeated on 3/4/09 at SCTI and the committee agreed there is a need to

plan more sessions on the Yoga training, which was a big success. Discussion ensued regarding the lack of teacher training on strengthening vocabulary, literacy and phonological awareness, and to consider those topics as possibilities for next year. Kathy Stuckey made the suggestion of giving a choice to attendees next year of receiving a CD with the handout information included or receiving a binder. This could be asked of the attendees on the registration form and color coded on name tags. Another suggestion was to post the handouts on the Coalition webpage, as is done with the ECA conference handouts.

Look for the Stars Update:

- **Assessments:** Mary reported that she had a meeting with the Devereux team last Monday. Based on the feedback received last year from providers, the Coalition has incorporated specific suggestions into this year's contract. Some of these include: assessments will be a minimum of 3 hours; assessors will make every effort to arrive in time to observe morning greetings with parents; assessors will ask questions for areas they do not observe; an extra class will not automatically be assessed if the score is under 4; a minimum of 2 classes will be assessed. Devereux has assigned a more mature assessor for the family providers who was a FCC provider herself. They also have a Spanish speaking assessor that they will bring in to assess the few sites that are mainly Spanish speaking. Mary reported that the staff development / qualification forms will be going out this week and that providers have received a list of things that they are expected to have for the document and file review portion of the assessments.
- **Mini grants:** Mini grant applications have been mailed out to 1, 2 & 3 star sites. Materials requested must meet needs identified on the Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) which is based on their assessment. For one and two star sites the mentor was required to sign off on the requests. The Coalition found that many of the sites had not stated that they were using a Character Development Program, which is a state requirement, so a flyer was sent out with the Mini-Grant approval letter stating that they will be required to attend a training on using the Kindness Curriculum and incorporating a character development component throughout their curriculum. .
- **Scholarships:** Valerie Walton gave an update on the status of the Scholarships. MCC has signed the scholarship agreement with the Coalition and a check is in the process of being sent to them. As it stands now, classes / scholarships will be approved for the next session (Summer Session) which starts in May. SCTI has the scholarship agreement and the Coalition is waiting to have it returned. Kathleen Sullivan reported that the agreement is being reviewed at an upper level at SCTI. But it is anticipated that a similar arrangement will be worked out. Valerie reported that USF is not able to set up the scholarship process the way the Coalition had preferred – to set up an account and receive a lump sum check for the scholarships – but will require that a check be written to them for each individual student and each class. Individual teachers have already submitted applications for scholarships and once all arrangements are completed, Valerie will process those requests. Kathy Stuckey reported that she has been working on a BA level with a teaching certification (birth through 4 years) as well as a BS in early childhood education for MCC.

3. NEW BUSINESS

ELC Training Plan Review: A copy of the plan was included with the handouts for this meeting. Janet Kahn reported that the plan presented in the fall was implemented as planned and now the committee needs to identify what trainings need to be followed up on in the Spring, or what new topics should be planned based on observed training issues. Discussion ensued regarding directors needing financial management training and a suggestion was made that the Directors Connection for next year may need to have meetings tailored to different skill levels. It may be helpful to assess directors for their strengths / weaknesses and determine the need for organizational leadership training on all levels. Janet asked the committee members to review the training plan and think about what the focus should be for the rest of this fiscal year and to begin planning for next year. .

Because it Matters: Janet gave an brief overview of this community initiative of the Gulf Coast Community Foundation that started with workplace civility programs, that expanded into the school district and now is expanding into the preschools. It supports a “community of caring” approach and is all about character development, including respecting and accepting others, thinking positively, and speaking kindly, all of the ten Keys of Civility that are the components if the Because it Matters campaign. The Early Learning Coalition has received approval from GCCFV to oversee the initiative in the preschools. The goal is to infuse a philosophy and way of interacting with one another that includes directors, teachers, children and parents, all reflecting and acting on the core principals. It will incorporate either PBS or DECA as well as the Because it Matters Keys of Civility. Twenty eight sites have indicated an interest in participating in the pilot program and it is planned to begin with a Kick Off in late March or early April. The program would involve training for parents and teachers and emphasize creating an environment for teachers, children and parents to all thrive.

Positive Behavior Support (PBS) Project: Gary LaFemina, PBS Project Coordinator, gave an overview of this program which is research based and uses materials and approaches developed by USF and the Center on Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning (CSFEL) among others. The Committee was reminded that at the provider conference 2 years ago on Creating a Caring Classroom Community, all participants received a CD that contained many of the materials available on the CSFEL website. The purpose of the PBS project, which is funded through a SAMSHA grant, is to increase the number of programs in our community that are able to meet the needs of children with challenging behaviors. This goal will be achieved by providing intensive training and mentoring of teachers and directors so they can develop the needed skills. Twenty programs with 30-40 teachers are participating this year and include the school district ESE programs, Children First and private community providers that are part of ELC network. Teachers and directors have received 6 days of training and Gary has already seen a better understanding of children’s behavioral concerns from teachers. He reported that before the trainings many teachers had discussed with him that a majority of the children they had in their classrooms needed to be referred to the Inclusion Specialist but after they attended the trainings they realized that they were dealing with a lot of behavior and environmental situations and not necessarily inclusion issues. Gary also reported that there is an assessment that goes with this program, known as the T-POT, that will be administered as part of the project to give a baseline of where teachers are on a pyramid. There will be a pre and post test of the T-POT for this first year.

DECA Training Series: SCTI will be conducting this series. Kathleen reported that they haven’t started yet due to staffing reduction but should begin within a couple of weeks.

Warm Line: Mary reported that some of the Warm Line procedures have changed to ensure that directors get an initial follow up call within a few days. The goal is to make the calls more productive for the Inclusion Specialists and the directors. After having an initial conversation appropriate information can be sent right away and needs can be prioritized. This topic will be addressed more fully at the next meeting.

Sarasota Partnership for Children's Mental Health update: This was tabled until the next meeting.

4. OTHER DISCUSSION

5. ANNOUNCEMENTS

- Elma McKay requested help for an August Preschool training, Saturday, August 15, that will be open to the community. Following the meeting we later learned that this will be part of Children First's in-service week but this portion of it will be open to all teachers and directors. Elma requested the Coalition's support to get the information out. As planned so far, this will be a full day of training (8:30 -2:00), with a keynote address, at Pine Shores, with anticipated attendance of 100-150 people. Elma reported that there has not been extensive planning yet but Children First staff might be doing some of the trainings.
- Mary reported that Candy will be conducting the Creative Curriculum training at SCTI, Room 502 on 2/26/09; 3/3/09; 3/10/09 and 3/17/09; 6:00 – 8:30. The Coalition will email training information to its distribution list. If providers show an interest in the remaining 3 classes to complete the series the Coalition may consider adding additional training modules.

6. ADJOURNMENT

Meeting was adjourned at 11:57 a.m. The next meeting will be Monday, March 16th, 10:00 a.m. at The Landings. *Note: After this meeting it was decided to resume the regular PDTQ meeting schedule of the 4th Monday of the month; the next meeting will be Monday, March 23rd.*

Submitted by Valerie Walton