



# Early Learning Coalition of Sarasota County

## January 2006 Newsletter

Information for all Early Childhood Educators

**DIRECTORS—PLEASE COPY THIS NEWSLETTER AND SHARE WITH YOUR TEACHERS!**



### Happy New Year! Project Updates

All of the Coalition staff wishes all of you a *Happy New Year!* Another busy year is ahead and there are many projects in the works, so here is a quick update:

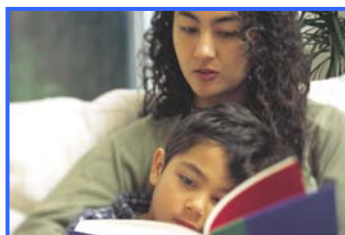
We had a huge response to the surveys we sent out recently regarding the need for substitutes and the need for sinks in classrooms. There is a very clear need for assistance with staff recruitment and training, and based on your feedback the sub pool project will now focus on the recruitment and training of staff for the early childhood education field, for both permanent positions and substitutes. To reflect the scope of this project it has been named STAR (Substitutes, Training and Recruitment). We will shortly be putting together an Advisory Group that will include child care providers to help with the ongoing planning and implementation of the project.

Based on the returned surveys, 104 classrooms are in need of sinks. Plans are in place to begin with the infant toddler rooms as a priority.

Provider Satisfaction surveys on the Child Care Connection operations were also sent recently, and those results are coming in. We need to hear from all of you as to how services can be improved. Please note that we have made several changes to the CCC telephone system to ensure that you can reach the right person and that you can reach a "live person" if the receptionist/operator is busy. If you experience a problem, please let the Director of CCC, Linda Mason (556-16000, ext 104) know about it so she can address it at the time it happens.

### Train to be a Literacy Mentor!

We are still looking for Directors interested in being trained to become Literacy Mentors for their own teachers and/or teachers from sites nearby. We are exploring a new project designed to improve the skills of our providers in creating literacy rich environments.



### Provider Conference Coming Up

Be sure to register for the Coalition's 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Provider Conference on Saturday, January 28, 2006, "*Embracing the Profession of Early Childhood Education*".

This year, we will be recognizing the professional accomplishments of attendees and will also have motivational activities throughout the day.

**New this year:** A "Bag Contest." We are asking you to bring a carryall bag to hold all of the conference materials. As in past years, we will have binders with the handouts of all of the presentations. In addition, the exhibit tables will have information on the various topics, and the associations will have materials there as well.



All of us have bags already, so we are asking you to **BYOB**, Bring Your Own Bag and dress it up or have your children help you decorate it. You could win one of the 5 prizes that will be given to the "best" bags!

### Preschool Fair

A Preschool Fair is being held the same day as the Provider Conference. For those of you, who are interested in showcasing your site for VPK or for your regular program, please plan to stay after the conference to participate. The MOMS Club hosts a fair and this year, the Coalition is helping to sponsor it. In order to make it easy for directors to attend both the conference and the fair (and to only give up one Saturday!) we are holding it the same day. You should have received a notice from the MOMS Club directly, but for additional information, please contact Suzanne Reiter, president of the MOMS Club, at 355-1147. The Coalition/Child Care Connection will have a display there as well to highlight VPK, scholarship services, and general information for parents on being their "child's first teacher."



## VPK NEWS



The Emergent Literacy Course for VPK instructors is now online, for those of you who have not previously taken a literacy course or those who just want an update. Go to "training" on the DCF website: [www.dcf.state.fl.us/childcare/](http://www.dcf.state.fl.us/childcare/)

The initial Standards Training has been completed. Those who attended the training received draft copies of the revised Standards. We have now received our initial allotment of the final versions, and Dianne Rose will be contacting the sites that attended the trainings so she can set up a time to deliver the Standards to you! For those who missed the first two trainings, one additional training on the VPK standards will be held in February - we will keep you posted.

Remember that Dianne Rose is available to provide technical assistance regarding your VPK classroom. If you have any VPK training or technical assistance needs, please contact her at 954-4830, ext 3.

In Sarasota we have over 1000 children enrolled in VPK programs. This is excellent! We are gearing up now for the summer program and soon after we will be enrolling for the fall session. Several providers that did not offer VPK classes this year are planning VPK programs for the fall. We will be holding an orientation meeting soon for new VPK providers (and those who would like a refresher course!), so stay tuned. **Thank you** to all our VPK providers!

For information on the VPK "movement" across the country and to keep up with the hot issues related to quality VPK visit the Pre-K Now website: [www.preknow.org](http://www.preknow.org)



## Infant and Toddler Trainings

Check out the enclosed flyer listing community wide trainings focusing on infants and toddlers, presented by the Florida Center for Children and Family Development and the Sarasota Family YMCA Gold Seal Project. Don't miss these great training opportunities!

Visit our website! Minutes of meetings and scholarship applications are posted. A calendar of meetings is also available, as well as the community training calendar. Look us up and give us your feedback! If any director or teacher would like to receive a copy of this newsletter via email, please contact the Coalition at the general email address below.

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## Would you like to Adopt a New Orleans site?

Scores of child care centers were damaged or destroyed when Hurricane Katrina struck New Orleans. The Child Care Companion Initiative is a project to help get those centers back up and running by linking them to organizations that will act as "Child Care Companions" to provide needed resources and materials. A flyer is enclosed with more information about how to help.



## Provider Self Assessments - Part II



The Coalition thanks all of you who returned the Provider Agreement and completed the Provider Self Assessment. As you know, this is the method we use in our community to ensure that child care providers are committed to maintaining quality programs and have appropriate practices and environment in place. We especially appreciate those of you who have honestly assessed what areas of your site need work, so that we can plan trainings and assistance accordingly.

We are now moving into the next phase of this process, which is to utilize a local rating system, taking the elements in the self assessments as a starting point. Don't panic! Remember, our goal is to support you! Any evaluation process will be used to assist you in meeting state mandates and creating and maintaining a quality site. Those of you who are actively working on this will be fine.

The Coalition had started exploring this issue at the same time an interest in an evaluation process was expressed in the community. Recently, several community leaders and representatives from the county, the Gold Seal Project and The Coalition Board met to explore how such a system could also be tied into additional support and assistance for providers. We will be reviewing what other Coalitions are doing and what the state is planning for the future and then determine what makes sense for our community. We will keep you informed, as we always do. In the meantime, Coalition staff will soon be taking a sample of the self assessments completed this year and "verifying" the information, in partnership with you, to determine what assistance we can offer now. We look forward to your participation!

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