



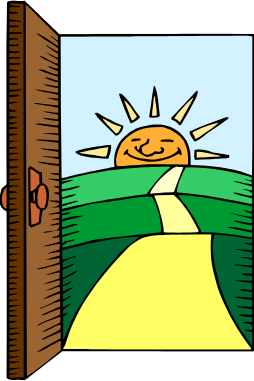
Early Learning Coalition
of Sarasota County

Early Learning Coalition of Sarasota County

December 2006 Newsletter

Information for all Early Childhood Educators

DIRECTORS: PLEASE COPY BLACK & WHITE VERSION OF NEWSLETTER TO SHARE WITH TEACHERS!



Change is in the Air!

Sunshine State Stars Quality Rating System is heading our way....

As we have mentioned several times in prior newsletters, Florida's Office of Early Learning, with input from many other organizations involved in early childhood education, has been developing a statewide quality star rating system. This new initiative, still in the development stage, is called the "Sunshine State Stars Quality Rating System." The purpose of this initiative is to establish a uniform rating system for early childhood programs, using research-based standards of early childhood practice. Many other states already have a QRS system.

In Sarasota County, major funding supporters have been working in partnership with the Early Learning Coalition and others to develop a quality star rating system (QRS) that will be customized to meet our local needs, but will also be comparable to systems that already exist in other counties and to the Sunshine State Stars Quality Rating System that the state is working toward.

This quality rating system will include multiple levels of ongoing support and incentives to assist providers in achieving and maintaining high quality learning environments that promote positive outcomes for children. It will also provide another tool for parents to evaluate quality overall and the specific elements within a given child care site.

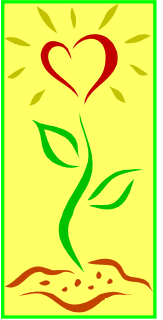
There are lots of details to be finalized, but we know that many of you have heard talk of a Quality Rating System and may have attended meetings or been part of committees, both locally and statewide, to provide input into the planning process. So stay tuned - there will be much more about this in future newsletters.

A quality rating system is heading our way!



REGISTER NOW! 6th Annual Provider Conference is Saturday, January 27th

Send in your application by December 30 to take advantage of the Early Bird Special price! This is going to be wonderful conference focusing on what matters most - social emotional development!



Early Learning Coalition's Literacy Initiative Launched



Many providers participate in the Reading is Fundamental (RIF) partnership, where childcare sites receive books for the children in care to take home and enjoy. This year, the Coalition wanted to expand the services offered through the RIF project to three year old classrooms. The goal of this literacy initiative is to enhance the overall literacy environment of the classroom with materials, create theme boxes for teachers to use based on popular children's books, and for mentors and teachers to work together to plan engaging activities that promote early literacy skill development. There are 12 child care sites, with 14 classrooms participating in this year's literacy program.

STAR Program Update



The STAR (Substitute Training and Recruitment) Program started just in time for the Holidays, with 14 substitutes working. All have passed a background screening, taken basic training classes, and have unique qualities.

To take advantage of our Holiday Special which runs through January 15th call Sandy Zook at our STAR Program at 941-313-1304 to check availability of substitutes and discuss cost.

As Connie Snyder, Director of Pines of Sarasota Preschool, reported, "It was one of those days that a teacher called out, then another had car problems. This was the exact situation that I enrolled in the Star Program for. It worked great! The sub did a great job with minimal instruction and we made it through the day. The program really worked for me."



VPK NEWS

The State announced the results of the 2006 Florida Kindergarten Readiness Screener (FLKRS) on December 8th. Both statewide and in **Sarasota County readiness rates increased**, with the greatest percentage of students ever demonstrating early literacy skills. The FLKRS includes selected measures from the Early Childhood Observation System (ECHOS) and from the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS).

Kindergarten readiness data will be used to calculate the readiness rate for VPK providers. Although information on individual sites' rates are not yet available, **The Coalition will hold a VPK meeting on Thursday, January 11**, to provide an overview of the general process for determining the readiness rates and what the improvement process will look like. This meeting will also be time for us to exchange ideas, get feedback, and discuss together what is working and areas where VPK providers need assistance. **We hope to see you there!**



VPK Meeting
Thursday, January 11
Location TBA
6:30 to 8:30 PM

Note: Additional **VPK Standards Trainings Part I. All are on Tuesday: January 16, February 27 and March 20.** Call Dianne Rose, 954-4830 ext. 3.

Important Reminders from Joyce Miller-Porter, VPK Reimbursement Specialist:

- * Please **do not fax and mail attendance documents** (you may call 556-1600 ext 110 to confirm attendance sheets have been received)
- * **Monthly absences reports** are needed each month
 - Absence notes are not needed, until requested
 - # of absences must be listed in each column
- * **Parental Certification Forms (SAPCC) are needed only when requested**
 - Requests for SAPCC forms will be included with your attendance sheets
- * **VPK Program Change forms:** Make sure there is an effective date for all program changes.

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, contact the Coalition at the general email address below.

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Gold Seal Project Is Ending

Having successfully met its goals and helped many of you become accredited, the long standing Sarasota YMCA Gold Seal project is coming to an end in March. The Coalition would like to commend the Gold Seal project and its dedicated staff for their efforts and hard work on behalf of quality child care in Sarasota County. The Gold Seal funders are continuing to support child care by working with the Coalition and other community organizations on developing a local quality rating system, with supports and incentives to assist providers, as described in this newsletter.

Sites in the Gold Seal project have already heard the news from the YMCA and may be wondering what effect this will have on them. The ending of the Gold Seal project does not mean that support for accreditation will end, nor does it mean that the comprehensive services offered by the Early Learning Coalition will not continue.



The Coalition has always supported accreditation, but has been careful not to duplicate what was already offered through the Gold Seal project, and therefore focused mentoring resources on sites not receiving services through Gold Seal. Of course, the Coalition will continue to offer its range of services, including trainings, scholarships, mentoring, technical assistance and program materials, *to support all child care providers.* In addition, the Coalition will assume some of the existing support services offered to accredited sites (such as the Director's Connection), as needed or requested by providers.

It is also important to remember that the Coalition has a long-standing partnership with the Florida Center to provide a comprehensive range of inclusion support, on-site consultation to teachers and directors, and intervention to children who need additional services. Sarasota County's recently formed early childhood mental health partnership will strengthen these services even more.

As the quality rating system is implemented, all providers will have the opportunity to benefit from the supports that will be offered as part of that system too.

Child Care Connection of Sarasota
 (Resource & Referral, Scholarship Child Care Program, VPK, Provider Payments)
 2886-C Ringling Boulevard Sarasota, FL 34237
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