

7th Annual Provider Conference a



BIG Success!

Early childhood teachers, directors and educators gathered together for the Coalition's 7th Annual Provider Conference on Saturday, January 26th to learn, share experiences, and celebrate the vitally important work of early childhood care and education. **With attendance over 350 and 15 different breakout sessions this was the largest Coalition conference ever!** Evaluations and comments were very positive and it was inspiring to be part of such a dedicated group of professionals. The crowd was so large that we are already considering ways to accommodate more participants at Pine Shores next year!



Super Kids + Super Care = Star-Bright Futures

The "Look for the Stars" Quality Rating Improvement System (QRIS) is here! A QRIS announcement, flyers for the ITERS/ECERS training, and times and dates for informational meetings on the QRIS were mailed to all child care providers on February 1 and are also posted on the Provider Exchange page of the Coalition website, www.earlylearningcoalitionsarasota.org. Note that the Directors Connections meeting date has been changed to Wednesday, February 27th, so the QRIS meeting scheduled before the Directors Connection has also been changed to February 27th. The Directors Connection meets at St. Paul Lutheran Church, 2256 Bahia Vista Street, in Sarasota.

The Coalition Welcomes New Faces!

For those who haven't met them already, the Coalition would like to introduce 2 new staff members.

Marjorie Fondacaro, Quality Program Manager, has a wealth of early childhood experience, having been an elementary school teacher, family child care provider for 9 years, infant and toddler specialist, child care licensing inspector, and most recently a Quality Assurance Specialist at Resource Connection for Kids in Manatee County. Marjorie is a certified ECERS assessor, infant and toddler specialist, and trained as a Beyond Centers and Circle Time presenter. We are looking forward to taking full advantage of her many skills and expertise!



Erin Lawrence has assumed the position of Project Coordinator held by Sandy Zook, who returned to Kansas City at the end of the year. Erin coordinates the STRDE substitute and teacher recruitment program along with other responsibilities that support the Coalition's work. Erin has recently moved back to Sarasota from Illinois and has strong computer, organizational, and communication skills, as well as expertise in art and design, as shown by the several awards she has received for her art work.

We are delighted to welcome Marjorie and Erin to the Early Learning Coalition team!



Mini-Grant Update

The Coalition awarded 85 Mini-Grants to centers and family child care providers in December. Applications that were approved demonstrated an understanding of how the materials requested will help children reach the skills delineated in the Florida Early Learning Standards and those whose applications were not approved were given an opportunity for training and a chance to resubmit.

Helping providers acquire needed materials and equipment through Mini-Grants is one way the Coalition supports providers in their efforts to offer quality programs and learning environments. **Mini-Grant reports are due by February 28, 2008.** The form is posted on the ELC documents page on the Coalitions website, www.earlylearningcoalitionsarasota.org, or you may email or call the Coalition to request a copy. We want to know how Mini-Grant materials are being used in your classrooms!





VPK NEWS

VPK Provider Readiness Rates

The VPK Readiness Rates for 2006-2007 were released on January 18th and providers were given 2 weeks to review their data before the final

readiness rates are set by the Board of Education and publicly posted. The Readiness Rate website is www.vpk.fldoe.org. Remember that the Readiness Rate is only one measure of quality and needs to be interpreted in the context of an entire program. The Coalition will keep you updated and will continue to work with all of you to ensure that children in Sarasota County receive the high quality early learning experiences they need to be ready for learning and ready for life.

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Attention VPK Providers!

VPK Parent Enrollment begins March 18th!

The Coalition assumes that current VPK Providers will continue to offer VPK in the 2008/2009 School Year. **Any new VPK Providers must contact the Coalition for a VPK orientation.** All VPK Providers will need to submit a new VPK Form 10 and a VPK Form 11 for each VPK Class along with the VPK Statewide Agreement and VPK Calendar. All



teachers must be approved by the Coalition, have appropriate education credentials and must have their level 2 background screening, including FBI fingerprint clearance, current within 5 years before they start. Go to the Coalition website below and click on VPK for links to the VPK 10 and 11, the VPK Agreement, and VPK calendar or call 954-4830 ext. 4. **Emails with more information on the VPK process coming soon, so stay tuned!**

Family Child Care Providers

A Place of Our Own Series a Hit!

The first 2 workshops of this 6 part series for family child care providers has gotten great reviews! Participants receive books, materials, in-service hours, and *breakfast*, all courtesy of WEDU.

RSVP to the Coalition at contact information below.



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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Sponsorship by Early Learning Coalition of Sarasota County, Agency for Workforce Innovation, Office of Early Learning, State of Florida, Sarasota County Government

Celebrate Children's Week

March 30 – April 6

It's that time again! Please give us a hand!

Children's Week is an opportunity to remind our community and elected officials of the importance of honoring children and families as the foundation of our community.

To demonstrate the commitment teachers and directors have to the well being and education of young children, please **send children's hand artwork** to be displayed in the Capitol Rotunda in Tallahassee and in our community. The "hanging of hands" is a Children's Week tradition and reminds our legislators every time they walk through the Capitol that all children and families need and deserve resources and support. The Coalition will celebrate Children's Week locally in the **Coalition's Child Care Connection** lobby with small gifts for children and families and partner with the library to present Children's Week events.



Instructions for artwork:

Children's hand prints should be stapled onto string or ribbon vertically for easy hanging. Call Karen Massa at 556-1600 ext. 106 for more information. Art work must be received by **Monday, March 17th**. Send to: **Child Care Connection, 2886-C Ringling Boulevard, Sarasota, 34237**

STRDE Program Growing

The Substitute and Teacher Recruitment, Development and Education (STRDE) Program is growing! We now have 14 centers throughout Sarasota County that are using our services. The STRDE program (formerly STAR) provides a pool of qualified, screened substitutes in the event of a teacher absence or other situation. Please email **Erin Lawrence** at elawrence@earlylearningcoalitionsarasota.org or call 313-1304 for information about the pro-rated cost for your program if your center signs up now.



Trainings → Trainings → Trainings →

Check out all the upcoming trainings in the enclosed flyers and in the Training Calendar. There's a lot going on you won't want to miss!

Resource Room Bulletin

N~ Lesson Planning with **Dianne Rose** is available in Resource Room, plus tons of materials and great ideas! Call 556-1600 x 118 for more information. See you there!