

10th Annual Provider Conference



The Power of Intentional Teaching

The Conference theme this year, **The Power of Intentional Teaching**, shines a spotlight on the crucial role teachers play in delivering quality programs to children.

With the emphasis on standards, curriculum, assessments, and core competencies in recent years, this shift in focus is right on target. The critical importance of early experiences to children's future development is well established. Brain research is continuing to reveal new findings about how children learn. Now studies are analyzing what classroom factors have the greatest impact on children's social development and school readiness skills, and have identified the quality of the teacher as a key ingredient – as important as class size, ratios, curriculum, or teacher credentials, all of which have a significant impact.

This recognition has sparked renewed attention to the requirements and professional expectations for those who work with young children. Education standards, curriculum, assessment and core competencies are designed as tools to ensure that a consistent level of quality is delivered. However, teachers need training and support to acquire the skills and knowledge to use these tools as they were intended – as guides for what to do in the classrooms and as guides for professional development.

Teaching is a complex undertaking and to offer quality programs teachers must know what they are doing – they must be **"intentional."** In her book, *The Intentional Teacher*, Ann Epstein says, "Best practices require us to always be thinking about what we are doing and how it will foster children's development and produce real and lasting learning – the definition of intentional teaching."

In practice that means teachers need to understand child development; know how to set up the environment; be able to develop appropriate lesson plans correlated to the standards; implement a curriculum; use strategies to strengthen social emotional skills; present activities that are rich in content that challenge, stimulate and engage children; work with children individually and in small and large groups; use assessment to individualize instruction; and also be able to forge supportive relationships with parents.

That is a tall order, but many teachers do it every day.

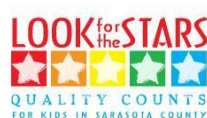
The emphasis on quality programs and teacher training makes sense when you consider the implications for children's development. A report (Feb. 2010) by the National Center for Research on Early Childhood Education, titled ***Learning How Much Quality is Necessary to Get to Good Results for Children***, found that:

"A threshold for classroom quality does, in fact, seem to exist... You might expect that children would simply get fewer benefits from low quality programs. But this study shows that programs need to function at least at the mid-level of quality and often times higher to get to good results for children. Lower levels of quality do not help children develop socially or academically."

It is gratifying that the powerful role of teachers is being recognized, and also a reminder of how important it is for teachers to be lifelong learners – to be aware of new research findings, be open to new approaches, and be willing to try new strategies and ways of looking at children and themselves.

The Conference this year is designed to offer relevant information with something for everyone – 3 breakout sessions and over 17 different workshops, geared to directors, new and experienced teachers, and preschool and infant and toddler teachers. We are fortunate to have **Dr. Alisa Ghazvini**, Early Childhood Consultant to the Department of Education/Office of Early Learning, deliver the keynote and **Dr. Mike**, a big hit at the FLAECY Conference in Orlando, present 3 breakouts and a short inspirational closing.

The Early Learning Coalition has tremendous respect for the efforts and hard work of early childhood professionals. We know what a demanding job it can be and how much knowledge, empathy, and creativity it takes to do it well. We hope to see you and celebrate early childhood educators at the Conference.



Look for the Stars Update

The three year pilot period for the Look for the Stars Quality Improvement System (QIS) ended with the 2010 assessments. The Coalition contracted with Shelley Robertson, a private consultant, to write a report summarizing the program delivery and the assessment data. As soon as this report has been finalized and reviewed by the Quality Child Care Council we will send an email notice and post it on the Coalition website. Preliminary findings were presented to the Quality Child Care Council and the members were very impressed by the significant gains in quality made by child care providers in our community in just three years.

The Children's Forum will begin ITERS, ECERS and FCCERS assessments in mid January. Assessors will start calling to notify providers of their 3 week window the first week of January. Please be sure to complete the attached Survey immediately after your assessment visit. The Coalition values your feedback and needs this information so that any issues or problems with the assessment process can be addressed right away. We appreciate your participation.



VPK News

It's hard to believe, but soon it will be time to register for the Summer 2010-2011 VPK program and the School Year 2011-2012 VPK program.

In reviewing VPK files to prepare for the State's audit of Coalition programs, several issues of concern were noted. To correct these problems and to ensure that all VPK programs are in compliance with State requirements, the Coalition will be establishing new procedures going forward. **Directors are responsible for receiving and reading all emails from the Coalition concerning the VPK program so they are aware of these changes.** The State requires that funding be recouped from any provider who is found to be out of compliance, so it is imperative that providers understand and follow all requirements.

Along with the Coalition's new procedures, the State has issued a revised VPK Statewide Agreement and revised VPK Forms 10 and 11. The VPK 11 is now 2 forms – VPK 11A and VPK 11B. All revised forms and the instructions for completing forms 11A and 11B are posted on the Coalition website, VPK page, www.earlylearningcoalitionsarasota.org. **Only applications using the revised forms will be accepted.**

Any questions about the new VPK forms or procedures should be addressed to **Laura Woodson**, who has responsibility for reviewing and approving VPK files. Laura can be reached by email at lwoodson@childcareconnection.org or by phone at 954-4830 x 116.

Another change in VPK policy has to do with **VPK child re-enrollment**. Effective December 21, 2010, parents are only entitled to one re-enrollment (transfers to a new provider) during the VPK program year, and only if their child has **not** substantially completed the program (70% of the program year hours). The re-enrollment allows the child to complete the hours remaining in his/her program year. If a parent has already changed providers this current VPK program year, that counts as their one time re-enrollment. Please contact **Karen Massa** at kmassa@childcareconnectionsarasota.org or call 556-1600 ext. 106 with any questions about this change.

Improving Outdoor Play Spaces

We all know children need to get outside and get moving every day. For simple suggestions on how to engage children and extend outside play, check out Jim Greenman's list of **25 Ways to Improve Your Outdoor Space**. His ideas show that expensive equipment is not required to create an outdoor environment that captures children's imagination.



Parent Sign In / Sign Out Sheets

To avoid having to maintain 2 separate lists, several directors have asked for a sample parent sign in/out sheet that would meet both Coalition and State requirements for parent signatures and licensing requirements for teacher initials verifying attendance. Please feel free to use the attached example, which is also posted on our website.

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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Trainings Coming Up

Some interesting trainings will be offered in the next few months. Dr. Tracy Jaekel will present a series of workshops on implementing the **Second Step** Pre/K Program, described as a "research-based program (that) feels like play but builds critical social and school-readiness skills that can help young children achieve more and get along with others." Second Step is aligned with both the DECA and with the PBS approaches and priority will be given to teachers who have attended those trainings and are implementing those practices. Participants will receive the Second Step kit (a \$250 value). For additional information on the resources available as part of the Second Step program, visit <http://www.cfchildren.org/programs/ssp/prek/>.

Dr. Jaekel will also offer community-wide trainings on the new ASQ-3 and the ASQ-SE (Social/Emotional). Starting this year providers will be expected to conduct ASQs using these tools. Stay tuned for more information on use of the new ASQs screeners.

Many directors and teachers have asked for more Creative Curriculum trainings. We are pleased to report that Cindy Wentzel, through the Coalition's contract with SCTI, will offer several Creative Curriculum overview trainings in both North and South County in the next few months. Watch your email – training dates and locations will be announced soon.

A reminder that all Coalition-sponsored trainings are **FREE**. As a courtesy to presenters and to those on the wait list, anyone who has registered for a training but is unable to attend, **must call and cancel**. To support transfer of knowledge into practice, and in alignment with the Florida Professional Development model, all trainings require **follow up activities** for in-service certificates or CEUs.



Director's Connection

The Director's Connection meets the 3rd Wednesday of the month. Directors who were not able to make it in 2010 should make a resolution to start attending in 2011. This is an opportunity for directors to get together, have lunch, share, socialize, support each other and learn. Claudia Malecki, Director's Connection Coordinator, has been a director herself and understands the reality of the job. This year meetings are organized around the book **Leadership in Action: How Effective Directors Get Things Done**, and many directors have commented on what a good resource it is. Come to the Director's Connection to get a free copy of the book and to spend time focused on yourself and your work as a director.

