

Early Learning Coalition of Manatee County, Inc.
Quality Committee Meeting
October 28, 2008

A meeting of the Executive Committee and the Finance Committee of the **Early Learning Coalition of Manatee County** was held on October 28, 2008 at 12:30 PM at 3526 Ninth St. W., Bradenton, Florida 34205.

Present:

Board Committee Members:

Dr. Kathy Stuckey, Chair

Annette Larkin

Jennifer Radebach

ELC:

Paul Sharff, E.D.

Lissa Ledbetter

Jay Burnell

Wendy Gaudio

Cheryl Francis

Other:

Rodriguez A. Perry

Janet Hamstra

Kristin Terrell, A Child's Galaxy

Kim Coleman, A Child's Galaxy

Jack Hamilton, AWI

These minutes are a summary of discussion, action, and informational items of the Early Learning Coalition of Manatee Quality Committee meeting.

Welcome and Introductions:

Dr. Kathy Stuckey, Committee Chair, called the meeting to order at 12:30 P.M. and welcomed all present. Each attendee provided a brief introduction.

➤ **Action items:**

- Mr. Sharff stated that one of our main objectives is to provide assessments for providers and follow-up with Technical Assistance, and that last week the providers visited were, at the highest, a 3; Matt and Jennifer from AWI said that is also the national average. Mr. Sharff suggested that we provide the ERS books to providers and give them the quality checklist for future assessments, as it is senseless to rate them without helping to improve them. He stated that Matt Moore is sending samples of quality checklists that relate to iters and ecers. By July, we should be able to go out with the iters and ecers monitoring tools and follow-up with immediate T.A. Gave example of insufficient crib #'s - ELC could provide extra materials/equipment for compliance. He stated that we need to decide: 1. how we will do assessments, 2. how/if we will process mini-grants, 3. how we will implement the T.A., 4. finalize the ELC Plan; (it started out as a good plan in 2006, but was not followed; a transition plan was followed instead. AWI requires that our plan be a working, living document. The current plan just needs revisions to make it a working document that we can live with), and 5. how to move forward with the TIPS program, with Ms. Hamstra's involvement.

Dr. Stuckey asked whether any of the centers accredited? Mr. Sharff stated that some have Gold Seal. Dr. Stuckey inquired as to whether the assessors went to Grandma Jones? Mr. Sharff answered 'No.' Dr. Stuckey asked for documentation of past assessments. Ms. Larkin pointed out that assessments are a 'snapshot'. Ms. Radebach stated that if a center is accredited, it will result in a good score. Ms. Larkin added that the providers need to decide 'are they a 3 or are they a 5?' Dr. Stuckey asked if we were using Five Stars QRS. Mr. Sharff stated that it was mentioned in the EL Plan. Ms. Larkin expressed concerns with the 'snapshot' aspect. Dr. Stuckey stated that quality is comprised of low ratios, trained teachers, and appropriate activities. She stated that she did not want the ELC to 'police' centers, but to be supportive. Mr. Sharff responded that this absolutely would not happen; that the ELC wants to fix what's wrong using quality dollars, and that first we need a baseline for quality. Jennifer Radebach questioned why the ELC is not ready. Mr. Sharff explained that during the brief training last week, non of the ELC trainees reached 'reliable' status, as well as the determination by the AWI trainers that the centers were not ready, that they need the books and list in order to improve their programs before being assessed.

Mr. Sharff questioned the committee as to whether they want to continue with the ERS tool. Dr. Stuckey stated that it's not the best, but it is better than a lot. Ms. Larkin added that this is how the providers were already trained, but that there were inconsistencies (gave ex. of infant handwashing - past assessors said it's optional, but according to the standards, they were then marked down for not doing it.) So the providers need to be trained over again with the actual criteria within the assessment tool. Ms. Radebach said that her center was marked off for certain things that were her choices but that she 'took the hit' in order to do things as she desired. She stated that we now need to get people trained and get out and do the assessments.

Dr. Stuckey called for a vote on moving forward with ERS.

Passed unanimously.

Dr. Stuckey asked about the quality checklists. Ms. Larkin suggested that, since Matt is the expert, we should accept his recommendation. Mr. Sharff agreed and stated that Matt will provide two choices. Ms. Hamstra stated that we shouldn't approve an assessing tool unseen. Dr. Stuckey agreed. Mr. Sharff stated that we could approve the concept of using Matt's assessing tools with the ability to review them. Dr. Stuckey called for a vote to approve the concept of using the assessing tools provided by Matt Moore. Passed unanimously.

Ms. Terrell questioned the use of the alternative scoring in the back of the ERS book and why it is not used by the assessors, citing an example regarding her building's layout and its bathroom placement affecting her score. Ms. Ledbetter explained how the alternative scoring works—that it simply allows assessors to move beyond unmet criteria and continue giving unofficial credit for criteria met. Ms. Terrell shared her frustration over the impact of the lack of a bathroom affecting her otherwise good score.

Ms. Hamstra explained the criteria for cribs: that each child enrolled must have his/her own crib. Ms. Larkin and Ms. Ledbetter discussed the fact that the assessing tool does not allow flexibility with regards to bathroom placement.

Dr. Stuckey requested that the committee determine the objectives at this point. Ms. Ledbetter stated that the ELC plan has been used up to this point, with missing components added to reflect the current status of the assessing/monitoring. Mr. Sharff stated that this committee can add what's necessary. Mr. Burnell added that the committee can decide the priorities. Ms. Ledbetter stated that the list of possible tasks was researched and came from current knowledge, assessed needs, and brainstorming. Mr. Sharff asked whether iters and ecers would or would not drive the quality plan. Ms. Ledbetter stated that we have three specialists in the field monitoring and should proceed with either the quality checklist and/or the ERS scales. Dr. Stuckey asked whether the plan was current. Mr. Sharff stated that it was created in 2006 but that some of it was not completed and that we are trying to move forward and improve it. Mr. Burnell added that we have to comply with it for reporting to the state. Mr. Sharff added that the attachments are what is currently being put into place.

Mr. Sharff stated that the committee is being asked to approve recommending the quality portion of the plan to the board with the ability to subsequently make additions. Ms. Hamstra asked if this goal, regarding staff, was realistic. Mr. Sharff and Ms. Ledbetter both stated that it is.

Mrs. Hamstra asked about the status of the mini-grants. Ms. Ledbetter explained that the mini-grants were up for approval today, that the committee needs to decide whether to go forward with the mini-grants. Ms. Radebach stated that quality involves more than assessing, and listed things such as the lending library and activity helps and stated that in some cases the activity helps that used to be sent to the providers monthly were used as their curriculum. Ms. Ledbetter brought up the idea of a newsletter to providers with the activity helps included. Mr. Sharff stated that once we have an approved plan we can add in these ideas.

Dr. Stuckey asked what initial objectives do we want to include. Mr. Sharff explained that if we get the broad plan approved we can move forward and everyone can bring their ideas to the next meeting to be considered for inclusion in the plan.

Dr. Stuckey questioned the details of the mini-grants, the \$500 limit, and how it would be determined who is eligible. She shared a concern that she is aware that centers may pocket money thereby the ELC's funds would fail to benefit the children. Ms. Hamstra shared concerns over how it would be decided who would get the money and how the amount would be determined. Ms. Radebach suggested that a different focus could be set for each year, such as playground equipment. Dr. Stuckey stated that a possible criteria could be a '5' rated center over a '1'. Ms. Terrell stated that it should be determined: why is it a '1'? Is the owner taking too much home? Is it a lack of funding? Mr. Sharff asked whether the T.A. funding should be tied to the mini-grants, and suggested that since ELC has \$150,000 available, we could assess what they need subsequent to assessing the center and help them with their needs. Ms. Radebach stated that the dollars need to be spent in other places as well, such as the lending library and 'make and takes'. Dr. Stuckey stated that we should be able to determine that they're (the centers) trying, and we could reward for refresher training, also. Mr. Burnell questioned whether we should spend \$5,000 of the money available on the ERS books, or should they be obtained from the lending library. Ms. Larkin stated that RC4K has the books available.

Dr. Stuckey stated that the help needed by providers does not necessarily involve lots of money, but could be accomplished by the sharing of expertise; we need to go out and show them. Ms. Radebach stated that we need to provide creativity.

Dr. Stuckey stated the desire to leave mini-grants out of the plan. Ms. Hamstra stated that we need to implement TIPS and get ERS going.

Dr. Stuckey recommended that we hold off on mini-grants and give providers technical assistance as needed. Ms. Ledbetter questioned resources for actual classroom equipment needed. Dr. Stuckey stated that MCC has a lending library. Ms. Larkin stated that teachers want to keep equipment. Ms. Radebach stated that the question is: why don't they have the equipment to begin with?

Dr. Stuckey recommended that we spend the dollars on actual things needed. Ms. Hamstra stated that we tie it to the TIPS program, that they need to go to class. Ms. Larkin pointed out that many E.C. teachers have second jobs, making attending class difficult. Dr. Stuckey stated that there is value to rewarding good behavior. She stated that, regarding the objectives, the wording 'mini-grant' be dropped.

Mr. Sharff stated that, regarding the objectives, we could start assessing the largest centers first and follow up with technical assistance dollars. That would impact the most children the fastest. Dr. Stuckey agreed that the first step is determining the order of assessing the centers. Ms. Hamstra stated that using the criteria of the number of children enrolled was used one year in the past.

Mr. Sharff recommended that one meeting of the providers should be required. Ms. Larkin suggested every other month. Dr. Stuckey stated that if they are going to receive our funding, they should come to the meetings.

Ms. Hamstra stated that we need to address Ltr. G on Pg. 4 of the plan that mentions funding for parent programs such as teen parents. The committee agreed to review this section prior to finalizing the plan. Ms. Hamstra stated that she has concerns over the timeline of the TIPS program; we need to deplete the overstock, we need to revise the form and add dates; the forms don't include choices. Ms. Ledbetter gave an explanation of the choices. Ms. Larkin suggested that the date for turning in TIPS points be changed to May, for accounting purposes. Ms. Coleman inquired whether college classes are eligible for TIPS points. All agreed they are. Ms. Hamstra recommended that we use the current TIPS inventory for now.

Dr. Stuckey stated that we need a batch of ERS books for training as well as additional quality updates.

Mr. Sharff stated that we currently have 85 to 89 family home providers, 35 or so we give money to, some are registered, some are licensed, some get funding, some don't get funding. Dr. Stuckey briefly explained the history of the proposed licensing of FHCCs. Mr. Sharff stated that we have the support of government entities and community groups to go forward in support of licensing family providers. Dr.

Stuckey that MCC has a new president, is looking at four-year programs, including a B.E.C.E., teacher certification/national, and other new programs.

Ms. Radebach stated that the lending library at RC4K is not being used and asked when we would be using it again. Ms. Coleman added that they also have other machines such as laminators and Ellison dies. Ms. Terrell described the benefits to their center of the public library ban which allows teachers to check out books for children.

Dr. Stuckey scheduled the next meeting for Tuesday, December 09, 2008 at 12:30.

Ms. Terrell thanked ELC for welcoming them at the meeting and said that the ELC people have been very helpful to their center.

Mr. Sharff reminded everyone that we need to address the provider meetings.

➤ **Adjournment:**

Meeting was adjourned at 1:30 P.M.

Minutes prepared by:

Minutes approved by:

Wendy Gaudioso

Dr. Kathy Stuckey