



Early Learning Coalition of the Nature Coast

Serving Citrus-Dixie-Gilchrist-Levy-Sumter Counties

Provider Alert #5
November 8, 2007

On November 7, 2007, the Early Learning Coalition of the Nature Coast held their first annual board retreat. The retreat was facilitated by Dr. Marce Verzaro-O'Brien, Director, Training and Technical Assistance Services at Western Kentucky University Research Foundation. The purpose of the retreat was to review the current structure and operations of the Coalition and to discuss emergent issues. The following provides a description of the discussion and the significant action taken by the board.

Board Meetings: The board voted to change the current practice of rotating board meeting locations from county to county on a quarterly basis to holding all future board meetings in Dunnellon. The board directed staff to find a location in Dunnellon that, at a minimum, would provide access to teleconferencing but preferably provide access to video conferencing for the convenience of early learning providers. The board members anticipate that the results of this action will include the successful recruitment of additional Sumter County board members who have declined invitations to serve as a member due to the distance they must travel when the meeting rotation moves to Dixie, Gilchrist, and Levy Counties.

The board voted unanimously to change the structure of the board agenda. Specifically, the board directed staff to include board and committee/council minutes in the consent agenda and all action items under a separate section. Although the purpose of this change is to promote additional discussion and review of the action items board members may choose to group action items together for a single vote as deemed appropriate by the members.

In addition, the board voted unanimously to direct staff to include a training section in the agenda. The purpose of this section is to provide board members training with regard to their administrative responsibilities and to provide the opportunity to obtain a better understanding of the structure and functions of the early learning programs. Training topics are at the discretion of the executive director and should include topics such as Roberts Rules of Order, Government in the Sunshine Law, program descriptions and outcomes, administrative policies and procedures, etc.

Furthermore, the board voted unanimously to revise the monthly board meeting schedule to a bi-monthly schedule. As a result, the board will meet in accordance with the following schedule for the remaining months of FY2007-2008:

January 9, 2008 (this date was changed from the first Wednesday to the second Wednesday in January due to the Holiday)
March 5, 2008
May 7, 2008

In an effort to reduce the number of meetings per month for board members who also serve on committees and/or councils the board meeting dates are scheduled during the months that the Advisory Councils do not meet. The Advisory Council schedules are as follows:

<u>Citrus County Advisory Council</u>	<u>Tri-County Advisory Council</u>	<u>Sumter County Advisory Council</u>
December 10, 2007	December 14, 2007	December 12, 2007
February 11, 2008	February 8, 2008	February 13, 2008
April 14, 2008	April 11, 2008	April 9, 2008
June 9, 2008	June 13, 2008	June 11, 2008

The Administrative Committee will continue to meet on the fourth Wednesday of every month as follows:

December 19, 2007	March 26, 2008	June 25, 2008
January 23, 2008	April 23, 2008	
February 27, 2008	May 28, 2008	

Board Membership: The board voted unanimously to revise the governance policy to require all private sector members who are appointed by the Economic Development Council or the Chamber of Commerce to attend two Coalition meetings (board, committee, and/or council meetings) and a Coalition orientation conducted by staff prior to board approval of their appointment. The purpose of this action is to ensure that all board members have a basic understanding of the Coalition and its early learning programs prior to having the authority to vote on action items.

In addition, the board voted unanimously, based on an opinion submitted by the Coalition's attorney, to amend the eligibility criteria for private sector board members. Specifically, retired public sector individuals appointed by the Economic Development Council or Chamber of Commerce may be approved by the Coalition to serve as private sector members. It is the intent of the board that no more than 50 percent of the retired public sector members that have been appointed by the Economic Development Council or the Chamber of Commerce can be former education employees.

Program Observations: Staff presented the issues surrounding the current program observation system that was shared with providers in the October 29, 2007 Provider Alert. The board voted unanimously to authorize staff, in conjunction with providers, to draft a revised system to document provider compliance with Chapter 411.01 Florida Statutes. The following providers volunteered to work with staff on this project:

Lori Barnes	Jeanie Davis	Karen Evans (or Gale Woods)
Penny Hansen	Emily King	Jacqueline Lewis-Harvin
Charlotte Eadler	Diane Lord	
Jo Geib	Marilyn Beach	
Holly Bussard	Vicki Pitts	

Other providers who are interested in volunteering in this project should contact Sonya Bosanko at sbosanko@elc-naturecoast.org or (352) 563-9939 ext. 224.

In addition, the work resulting from the workgroup that was established during the provider retreat to develop a system to relate child outcomes to early learning provider performance will be incorporated into the revised provider observation/compliance system. The members of the Child Outcomes Workgroup are as follows:

Christi Wadsworth
Karen Lord
Cassie Romanik

Kim Watson
Diane Lord
Marilyn Beach

Vicki Pitts

Other providers who are interested in volunteering in this project should contact Sonya Bosanko at sbosanko@elc-naturecoast.org or (352) 563-9939 ext. 224.

Teacher Incentive Payment (TIP) Program: The Administrative Committee presented issues related to the goals of the TIP program versus the implementation of the program. Specifically, the committee notified the board of the lack of funding to support all applicants and requested the board to consider an amendment to the program policy and procedure. The purpose of the amendment is to ensure the program is designed to identify and serve types of teachers with a high turnover rate, to ensure the objective of the program is achieved. The board voted unanimously to award TIP stipends based on current policy and procedure. Although the current TIPS budget cannot support all applicants and will result in a waiting list of 58 teachers, the board authorized staff to award all stipends IF, in the likely event, the Coalition does not suffer a budget reduction as a result of the statewide decrease in public funding.

Furthermore, the board requested the Administrative Committee to complete the following by February 1, 2008:

- Outline the TIP program goals and establish that the program is a non-binding commitment for teacher incentives.
- Review and reevaluate current guidelines for eligibility requirements.
- Establish annual or bi-annual reviews of the program to implement necessary changes if required.
- Require program to be designed to operate within budgetary funding allowances.

Executive Director Evaluation: The board voted unanimously to request the Executive Committee to develop an evaluation tool for the purpose of evaluating the Executive Director's performance. The Executive Committee is responsible for presenting the evaluation tool to the board during the March 5, 2008 board meeting.

Outstanding Items: The following agenda items were not addressed due to the lack of time:

- Quality Initiative Funding Priorities: Early learning providers approached the Executive Director with regard to the board's priority for funding and awarding quality initiatives. The early learning providers stated their understanding of the federal purpose for quality initiatives is to improve the quality of all early learning programs including school readiness and non-school readiness programs. However, the early learning providers stated that due

to the lack of school readiness funding the board should consider adopting priorities for awarding quality initiatives to school readiness programs prior to awarding funds to other early learning programs such as the Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten and Head Start programs.

- Guiding Principles
 - Quality vs. Quantity: Recently, the board engaged in a budget reduction exercise as a result of a statewide decrease in public funds. During this exercise the board noted the absence of, or inconsistent perception of, guiding principles related to quality early education versus quantity of early education services.
 - Development vs. Academic: The board recently engaged in discussion with regard to the board members individual philosophy on the development of young children. 100 percent of the board members that were engaged in the discussion stated and acknowledged that the family unit is the single greatest barrier to academic achievement of children. The board members strongly agreed that the focus on a child's appropriate development is far more critical than a focus on a child's academic success which appears natural in typically developing children. Noting this, the board members committed to addressing this problem.

The board requested staff to invite Dr. Verzaro-O'Brien, at her earliest convenience, to another board meeting to facilitate discussion with regard to the items listed above.

If you have any questions with regard to the information provided in this update please contact Sonya Bosanko at sbosanko@elc-naturecoast.org or at (352) 563-9939 ext. 224.