



*The Coalition's Mission is to provide leadership and advocacy that builds a community where all children are prepared for success in school*

## Program Policy and Strategy Sub-Committee Meeting

Friday, April 30, 2010

9:00am – 11:00am

Early Learning Coalition of the Big Bend Region

325 John Knox Road, Building L, Suite 201, Tallahassee, FL 32303

### **Committee Members Present:**

Dr. Elsie Burton, Chair  
Catie McRae  
Ed Feaver  
Linda Nelson

### **Staff Present:**

Chris Duggan, Chief Executive Officer  
Lauren Faison, Chief Operating Officer  
Sam Sweazy, Vice President of Program Services  
Megan Gocs, Executive Assistant

### **Committee Members Absent:**

Andy Jackson  
Jeremy Cohen  
Maria Pouncey

### **Guests Present:**

n/a

### **1. Welcome and Roll Call**

Dr. Elsie Burton, Chair, welcomed sub-committee members and staff. Roll call was taken at 9:06am.

### **2. Approval of Agenda**

The motion to approve the agenda for this meeting was made by Catie McRae. This motion was seconded by Ed Feaver. This motion was approved.

### **3. Approval of Minutes**

As this was a sub-committee meeting, there were no minutes to be approved at this meeting.

### **4. Public Comment**

There was no public comment.

### **5. Discussion Item**

#### **a. Eligibility Priorities for School Readiness Services**

Each Early Learning Coalition in the State of Florida is required to set priorities for enrollment of families into the School Readiness tuition assistance program. Guidance for setting priorities is included in Florida Statute 411.01. Within the guidelines of 411.01, each Coalition Board may vote to prioritize enrollments from the wait list based on different local defined criteria.

During the February 18, 2010 Program Policy and Strategy Committee Meeting staff brought forth the issue of the high number of school age enrollments as compared to birth to five year old enrolled and on the wait list. After briefly discussing the issue, the committee called for a special sub-committee to meet to review this issue in depth. The Coalition's current eligibility priorities are, TANF recipients, then children at risk of abuse or neglect and then low income working families.

Before this meeting, staff identified several possible options for addressing the high number of school age enrollments. These options included, lowering the maximum age of children from low income working families who are eligible to participate in the School Readiness Program or, within the low income working population, prioritizing enrollments based on age or another Board identified criteria.

Lauren Faison introduced this issue to the sub-committee and spoke about staff's concern that there is a disproportionate amount of school age children enrolled in the School Readiness Program.

The sub-committee spoke about what the ARRA (American Reinvestment and Recovery Act) funds are currently being used for. Lauren F. informed the committee that the funds are currently being used on children that are going to naturally attrition out of the School Readiness Program before the funds are depleted. These children include Voluntary PreKindergarten wrap children, and older school age children. Families who were enrolled using these funds were told that the Coalition could only provide them with six months of tuition assistance. These groups of children were selected for this funding so that the younger children could be funded through the School Readiness base funding. The committee warned staff about being careful to not tie these families assistance too closely to the ARRA funds, because if there is another stimulus provided by the Federal Government, these families might feel like they are entitled to these funds.

In deciding how to approach eligibility priorities for School Readiness services, Elsie B. referred to our mission, to 'provide leadership and advocacy that builds a community where all children are prepared for success in school'. Elsie B. made the point that we should refer to our mission in figuring out how to prioritize eligibility for School Readiness services.

Chris Duggan informed the committee that one Coalition around the State of Florida went to eliminate school age children completely, but the public objected to it. Lauren F. reminded the sub-committee that we must serve school age children that are TANF recipients and are at risk of abuse or neglect.

If the Coalition was to serve more birth to five year old children, staff would need to project the cost of this because it costs more to serve these children than it costs to serve school age children. Staff estimated that the Coalition are able to serve one baby, infant or toddler for the same price it costs to serve three school age children.

The sub-committee discussed the issue of attrition, and when children should naturally attrition out of the School Readiness Program. Linda Nelson believed that children should attrition out of the program at the end of the school year. One of the committee

members suggested that children should be classified according to grade level instead of age.

Ed F. believed that the schools should take more responsibility for after school care.

After discussing this issue, the sub-committee recommended that when it comes time to re-certify families with nine to twelve year old children funded through the ARRA funding category, that these families assistance should not be renewed. The sub-committee also planned to recommend to the Program Policy and Strategy Committee that they consider making the Coalition's priority to serve birth to five year olds, except for TANF recipients and children at risk of abuse or neglect where the Coalition must serve all children that are referred. The sub-committee made these recommendations pending further financial analysis of what these decisions mean for the Coalition. Overall the sub-committee decided that the Coalition needs to keep true to the Coalition's mission when prioritizing for School Readiness services.

## 6. Other Business

Chris D. spoke to the committee about the Quality Counts meeting that took place on April 28, 2010. She informed the committee that the Coalition is working in partnership with Whole Child Leon and Moms Like Me to market the Quality Counts initiative. With the assistance of these two community partners, staff is looking at how to market this initiative to educate parents on choosing quality child care for their children. The Quality Counts Program will use a star rating scale to rate child care providers on their curriculum, screening and assessment; family engagement, health and safety, program administration and staff qualifications. Providers must obtain at least a three star rating in order to qualify to be a part of the Coalition's provider network. Scores will be announced once a year so providers will have twelve months to improve their rating if it needs improvement.

Meeting adjourned at 11:01am.

Minutes recorded by: \_\_\_\_\_  
Megan Gocs, Executive Assistant

Minutes Approved: Tuesday, May 18, 2010

Committee Chair's Initials: \_\_\_\_\_

Board Secretary Initials: \_\_\_\_\_

*A digital recording of this meeting is available at the office of the Early Learning Coalition of the Big Bend Region.*