



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 Committee Meeting

Friday, March 4, 2011

10:00am to 11:30am

Early Learning Coalition of the Big Bend Region

Northwood Centre, 1940 North Monroe Street, Suite 70, Tallahassee, FL 32303

Committee Members Present:

Dr. Elsie Burton, Chair
Maria Pouncey
Catie McRae
Jeanne Barker
Jeanne Martin
Ed Feaver

Staff Present:

Lauren Faison, Chief Executive Officer
Kathy Hayes, Director of Quality Assurance and Accountability
Regina D'Souza, Program Director (Contracts and Reimbursement)
Carrie Pafford, Program Director (Provider Services)
Megan Gocs, Executive Assistant

Committee Members Absent:

Sarah Glass
Lesia Johnson
Traci Leavine
John Grosskopf
Sharon Gaskin

Guests Present:

n/a

1. Welcome and Roll Call

Dr. Elsie Burton, Chair, welcomed committee members, staff and guests. Roll call was taken and quorum was established at 10:03am.

2. Approval of Agenda

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

3. Approval of Minutes for December 2, 2010 and January 24, 2011

The motion to approve the minutes for the Program Policy and Strategy Committee Meeting of December 2, 2010, with one minor change, was made by Maria Pouncey. This motion was seconded by Catie M. This motion was approved.

The motion to approve the minutes for the Program Policy and Strategy Sub-Committee Meeting of January 24, 2011, with one minor language change, was made by Jeanne Barker. This motion was seconded by Jeanne M. This motion was approved.

4. Public Comment

There was no public comment

5. Discussion Items

a. Quality Improvement System – Analysis of Quality Rating Scores

As requested by the committee in their last meeting, Lauren Faison provided the committee with an analysis of the relationship between what a provider's quality rating score and the number of School Readiness children they serve. Kathy Hayes, the ELC's Director of Quality Assurance and Accountability, who performed this analysis, explained it to the committee. The committee discussed the results of the analysis. From the results of the analysis, there seemed to more commonalities in the various aspects of the providers program, than in the various counties.

Ed Feather requested that staff provide the committee with a more detailed breakdown and analysis of the information provided. Staff will provide this to the committee at their next meeting. Ed F. also requested that an analysis be undertaken to compare the relationship between a provider's Quality Rating Score and their readiness rate.

b. 2011 Outdoor Learning Environment Project

Lauren F. informed the committee that an analysis of the results of the 2009 – 2010 Quality Rating Improvement Scores for all providers, identified that the safety and quality of their outdoor play environments is a common challenge. Therefore, staff proposed that the ELC undertake a short term project to provide twenty-five contracted School Readiness providers with intense, short term focused training to address the safety and quality of their outdoor play environments. The projected results will be immediate, measurable, and of benefit to the teachers and children in the participating early learning programs. A key element of this project is the research study which will look at the impact of negative behaviors, teacher interaction, health and safety incident reports, and child outcomes, as a result of the interventions, which include teacher training, materials and equipment, and onsite technical assistance. Due to the short timeframe and scope of work, the ELC will utilize a contracted service provider to implement the project. This project will be hugely beneficial to providers and the children they serve, as well make a great study for the ELC.

Lauren F. informed the committee that the funds to implement this project will come from the Unallocated Funds line item. Funds may also be utilized from the quality funding line item to purchase quality materials.

Providers would need to apply to be considered to be part of the project. It was explained to the committee that providers would have to commit to all aspects of the project to be eligible. As part of this project, the contracted service provider would be provided with training on how to set up an outdoor learning environment that is educationally rich and teaches children how to play and learn in a safe and healthy way. In addition to training, the contracted service provider would also assist with technical assistance and the purchase of quality materials. Lauren F. informed the committee that staff hope to have this short term project completed by June 2011.

Elsie B. informed staff that their needs to be very specific objectives that are clear and measurable. Maria P. suggested the possibility of more funds being made available for the inclusion of special needs children in this project. Elsie B. suggested the

requirement that a provider have fifty percent School Readiness children in order to be eligible for one of the twenty-five project positions.

The committee then discussed utilizing volunteers, staff members and parents to complete this project.

Lauren F. informed the committee that a selection committee will need to be formed to review applications. Elsie B. and Ed F. volunteered to be a part of this committee.

The motion to approve that staff move forward with the 2011 Outdoor Learning Environment Project was made by Jeanne B. This motion was seconded by Jeanne M. This motion was approved.

c. Quality Assurance and Accountability Unit

Lauren F. provided the committee with an overview of the new Quality Assurance and Accountability Department. She informed the committee that Kathy H. will be directing this department. This department will be responsible for implementing performance measurements, internal auditing, data collection, reporting and training. Lauren F. informed the committee that staff are going to utilize an external contractor, Donna O'Neal, to assist in the creation of performance measurements for the ELC. This department will also be responsible for documenting and mapping processes and procedures for each department.

d. Review Health and Safety (Ratio Violation) Policy

On December 9, 2008, the Board approved that effective January 1, 2009, that any ratio violation and/or capacity violations would result in disallowance of School Readiness payments for all children present at the time of the infraction.

Ed F. explained to the committee that he asked for this item to be added to the agenda for discussion as a provider had voiced to him their dissatisfaction with this policy. This particular provider was found out of ratio, and per the Board policy, was not paid for all School Readiness children present on that date. Because of this finding, an amount of approximately \$2,600 was withheld from this provider's reimbursement for that month. The committee was also informed that this provider has been a repeat offender in violating ratio. The committee discussed this policy, this particular incident and whether this policy requires review, retraction and/or amendment. The committee agreed that this policy would be reviewed again at their next meeting.

6. Action Items

a. Approval of Contract Enforcement Policy

Staff are currently in the process of reviewing all Coalition policies and procedures. Currently there is no policy that addresses providers that are out of compliance with their School Readiness Provider Network Contract, or their Voluntary Prekindergarten contract. This policy outlines enforcement steps that may be taken to ensure compliance with all provider contracts. The Program Policy and Strategy Committee were asked to review this policy and recommend it for Board approval.

The committee discussed this policy and expressed several concerns in relation to the draft policy that they were presented with. One of their concerns was the subjectivity of the disciplinary sanctions that could be imposed on providers out of compliance with

their contract. Lauren F. explained that the reason why the disciplinary sanctions were made to be subjective was so staff have the flexibility to decide what penalty is appropriate given the situation. She provided the committee with an example.

After discussing the policy, Lauren F. informed the committee that she would meet with Board Counsel to work on amending the policy to address the concerns and suggestions provided by the committee. The amended policy will be brought back to the committee at a later date.

b. Approval of Revised Sliding Fee Scale (With New Poverty Guidelines) for the 2011 – 2012 Fiscal Year

Eligibility for School Readiness services is determined on a sliding fee scale based on a family's income in relation to the Federal Poverty Guidelines. Each year upon release of the updated annual Federal Poverty Guidelines by the United States Department of Health and Human Services, the ELC is required to amend their current sliding fee scale to incorporate the new Federal Poverty Guidelines.

An important issue families often face when they transition from being a recipient of School Readiness funds to economic self-sufficiency is the adjustment of having to pay the full cost of child care. The ELC strives to support families in moving toward economic self-sufficiency by gradually increasing their co-pay in order to ensure a smooth transition from services for these families.

The federal register suggests as a benchmark that co-payments for eligible families be set at ten percent of their income. Staff have reviewed parents current co-payment rates in order make informed decisions in implementing our new sliding fee scales based on the 2011 Federal Poverty Guidelines. The Program Policy and Strategy Committee were asked to review the Sliding Fee Scale and recommend it for Board approval.

The motion to approve the revised sliding fee scale with the new poverty guidelines for the 2011 – 2012 fiscal year was made by Ed F. This motion was seconded by Jeanne M. This motion was approved.

c. Approval of 2011 – 2012 School Readiness Provider Network Contract

Each fiscal year, all providers participating in the School Readiness Program must sign a contract with the ELC. This contract clearly states all program requirements, expectations, and funding terms and conditions for participation in the School Readiness Program as defined by Florida Statute, the Office of Early Learning, and the ELC's Board of Directors. Each year this contract is reviewed and revised to include new requirements, provide clarification, and encompass any new Board policies.

Over the last twelve months, the Association of Early Learning Coalitions in conjunction with the Agency for Workforce Innovation's Office of Early Learning, have been working on creating a core School Readiness Provider Network Contract for all thirty-one Coalitions around the State to use. This contract will provide a basic structure and agreement which is consistent for all Coalitions and providers across the State. While it was originally planned that this contract would be ready for dissemination for the 2011 – 2012 fiscal year, due to the Governor's decision to halt rule making, this contract has come to a stand still, and will not be ready for this coming fiscal year.

Therefore staff proposed that the ELC use the provided 2011 – 2012 School Readiness Provider Network Contract which is more aligned with the draft statewide contract. A document containing changes from last fiscal year’s contract was provided to the committee.

Staff are also modifying the contract initiation process to include an application step where the provider will be required to submit all required documentation that establishes them as an eligible provider. Previously, many of these documents were included as part of the network contract. Lauren F. explained to the committee that the application process will be much like the Voluntary Prekindergarten contract process that is already in place. She also informed the committee that a number of other Coalitions have also moved to an application process prior to initiating a contract.

The Program Policy and Strategy Committee were asked to review the 2011 – 2012 School Readiness Provider Network Contract and recommend it to the Board for approval. The motion to approve the 2011 – 2012 School Readiness Provider Network Contract was made by Ed F. This motion was seconded by Catie M. This motion was approved.

7. Other Business

There was no other business to be discussed.

Meeting adjourned at 11:41am.

Minutes recorded by: _____
Megan Gocs, Executive Assistant

Committee Approval Date: _____

Committee Chair’s Initials: _____

Board Secretary’s Initials: _____

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