

## Board Retreat Minutes – 08/17/07



Early Learning Coalition of Miami-Dade/Monroe  
Board Retreat– Minutes of August 17, 2007 at 12:00 PM

BOARD ATTENDANCE: R. Beasley, A. Eckstein, N. Hernandez Hendrix, M. Hill, D. Lawrence, C. Lederman, H. Mogul, Y. Perkins, G. Schwartz, N. Seijas, O. Verdeja, A. Weller, D. Armstrong, C. Chapell, S. La Villa, D. Park, W. Harvey

BOARD NOT IN ATTENDANCE: S. Herald, Y. Johnson, J. Russell, D. Williams, M. Bryant, C. Jones, J. Robinson

STAFF ATTENDANCE: E. Torres, A. Parrino, B. Robinson, T. Cullen, N. Ali, T. Alonso, A. Pizano, F. Altare, C. Mason, B. Carrick, M. Williams

GENERAL ATTENDANCE: K. Rollins, D. Conde, E. Rivera, L. Carmona, K. Gersh

AGENDA ITEMS	DISCUSSION/CONCLUSION	RECOMMENDATION/ACTION
<b>WELCOME &amp; INTRODUCTIONS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Octavio Verdeja began with introductions and thanks to various board members for their service. He also gave thanks to providers and thanked Evelio and the Coalition staff for their phenomenal work in the past 6 months.                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⇒ Gerald Schwartz in turn thanked O.Verdeja for his service as the board chair.</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ O. Verdeja introduced Kwesi Rollins, the retreat facilitator, who came from Washington D.C. He thanked K. Rollins for coming.</li> </ul> <p>He stated that the Coalition has served 30,000 children. He emphasized that the Coalition is not like normal not-for-profits since they don't have unrestricted funds and no fundraising. He then thanked The Children's Trust for their partnership to the Coalition.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Evelio Torres stated that the Coalition couldn't do the work without the Board members. Everyone is always accessible and donates a huge commitment of their time, energy and effort.</li> </ul> <p>E. Torres also thanked Ana Seijack who helped to support the retreat and funded the facilitator, Connie Chapell who helped to get the room at Temple Israel, and Lisa Blair who put together beautiful baskets for children.</p>	
<b>VPK COMMERCIAL &amp; SPECIAL ACTIVITY</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Board members viewed the VPK commercial and participated in an activity with some of the children from the commercial. The children were paired with groups of Board members who asked them questions to learn more about who they are. Afterwards, the children were presented with gift baskets for participating.</li> </ul>	
<b>PURPOSE OF RETREAT</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ O. Verdeja stated that the purpose of the retreat was to set a course for the next year. The three groups the board would be split into were ELC Priorities, Quality vs. Quantity, and Development. He wanted board members to decide</li> </ul>	

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	<p>what they want to get out of the retreat and do the best they can to achieve that. At the end, they should decide on three items that they will set a time frame for and hold themselves accountable to.</p>	
<p><b>GROUND RULES</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ K. Rollins stated the rules of the retreat: (1) Only board members can participate in business of meetings (2) Cell phones on vibrate and silent (3) Comment cards are available for observers and will be answered at a later time.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>BYLAWS &amp; RESPONSIBILITIES OF BOARD MEMBERS</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ W. Harvey began with the duties of board members. He wanted to remind board members of their responsibilities and that the Coalition was there to assist with any questions. All committee and board meetings subject to sunshine law. This means that when any two or more members meet, it must be advertised and open to the public. Minutes of those meetings need to be taken if they are discussing matters that will come before the board. Any and everything is subject to Public Records Act. It is a requirement that the Coalition complies with code of ethics for the state.</li> </ul> <p>There is a broad and long list of rules; for example, the code of ethics tries to prevent board members from participating or voting on matters that involve substantial or financial interest. Board members are required to declare conflicts openly and submit a memo to the board recorder within 14 days to be noted in minutes. Violations carry severe consequences. The State and County Commissions on ethics are different. AWI issues a series of memorandum on how the Coalition should conduct their affairs. The Coalition is governed by those program memorandums.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ W. Harvey stated that the bylaws cover a variety of topics. The meeting requirements state that the Board must meet at least 6 times a year and have quorum to vote. Votes do not count via phone towards a quorum but you can still participate for both board and committee meetings. Committee Chairs can poll the members and forward recommendation to the board if there is not an established quorum. Board members must not miss more than 2-3 consecutive board meetings within a 12 month period.             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⇒ Natacha Seijas stated that when board members take a leave of absence, it hinders participation and the quorum being established.</li> <li>⇒ W. Harvey said it is not considered an absence if a board member attends by phone and there is still a quorum.</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ He also stated that the Board should go by the knee high rule which encourages getting involved with policies but not getting involved in day to day operations of the Coalition.</li> </ul>	

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<p><b>BUDGET OVERVIEW</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ In regards to the budget, E. Torres said it is the same as last year. The Coalition has new dollars in some areas. However, AWI has submitted proposal to the Governor’s office regarding budget cuts and the Coalition is expected to lose \$1.2 million. The Coalition will have to make adjustments and it is fortunate that they are contracting out services. The State has asked them to develop a disenrollment plan and focus less on quality. The Children’s Trust awarded a \$3 million grant for QRS to the Coalition. They also received \$3.7 million from the government for the local match.</li> </ul> <p>The Coalition needs to prioritize which children to serve. For at risk children, the State only requires the Coalition to prioritize children ages 3 – 5. However, they have decided to give younger children priority. Provider payments are also higher; the Coalition is paying \$10.5 million a month just to providers. E. Torres stated that his personal concern is that the Coalition needs to function more as a not-for-profit. There are no unrestricted dollars and grants do not allow fundraising. They are not spending enough time on trying to develop quality. The question is should the Coalition hold on to state dollars or try to raise private dollars.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⇒ Dave Lawrence stated that there is a quantity issue to meet, but the act is also set up for quality. He wouldn’t want to choose one or the other as the direction to go in. The Coalition needs to figure out a balance.</li> <li>⇒ Silvia La Villa responded that the impact of a quality program on adults, family, etc is priceless. Quality is desperately needed in the system.</li> <li>⇒ N. Seijas added that places create foundations to get money like Jackson Memorial. E. Torres suggested the Coalition could create a separate organization to raise money.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>INTRODUCTION TO BREAKOUT GROUPS</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The Board decided to discuss the issue of quality vs. quantity before breaking into groups. E. Torres stated that the Coalition has a requirement to spend some of the budget on quality programs.</li> <li>▪ Cindy Lederman responded that the issue is quality vs. garbage. The problem with licensing is that it doesn’t weed out garbage. They can’t take at risk children from bad environment to bad childcare and expect good results.</li> <li>▪ Yesenia Perkins stated the spending plan has been amended over several years. The Coalition has over exceeded minimum of 4% required to be spent on quality. However a percentage of the money counted as slots have to be outsourced.</li> <li>▪ D. Lawrence said they are loosing the battle on quality and significantly on</li> </ul>	

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	<p>the state. Ranging from the readiness rate (which does not measure anything valuable for children); false accountability measures with random samples, to the fact that there is a significant diminution of what the County is going to spend. They are in terrible danger of losing the primary mission of Coalition. Nothing means anything unless you have stimulating care that lead to outcomes for children.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Nora Hernandez Hendrix responded that the Board defines the standards to abide by. People in the community are frustrated that programs are limited to small number of recipients. The challenge is to look at level of quality that we want to ensure is the minimum and look at enhancements that are available through additional resources.</li> <li>▪ Connie Chapell stated, as an educator she could provide quality almost anywhere. There are facilities that are licensed that should not be. They need to hold licensing accountable and there needs to be a partnership. If you love kids, you can provide quality. The facility doesn't define quality. The facilities need support and training to help them provide quality. E. Torres said another issue to be addressed is parental choice.</li> <li>▪ Harve Mogul emphasized on one concern. The Board is faced with difficult financial questions. Do they stand for centers we fund or focus on today or tomorrow's children? There are very few entities that really care about tomorrow's children and it takes a lot of services and intervention for a child to learn and be successful. How do we integrate strategies and stand for all the aspects. If decisions are directional then the Board will be better placed.</li> <li>▪ D. Lawrence asked if the Board was talking about kids who are in licensed care or more than that. Then clearly the first obligation is to worry about children in subsidized care. However if they let this slip away then they will be the only kids. What can they do to grow ourselves out of this? Florida licensing requirements are pitiful. How do we reach out to grow additional resources?</li> </ul>	
<p><b>RECONVENE &amp; REPORT OUT</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ E. Torres announced that N. Hernandez Hendrix is no longer able to serve on the Board due to her new position at Miami Dade College and thanked her for her service to the Coalition.             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⇒ O. Verdeja added that the Coalition wants to create a foundation and they would like N. Hernandez Hendrix to be first member. N. Hernandez Hendrix said she was honored and gave thanks.</li> <li>⇒ D. Lawrence stated that N. Hernandez Hendrix was one of the best board members and expressed his deep sorrow that she is leaving. R. Beasley agreed, saying the only reason he is on the Board is because of her.</li> <li>⇒ N. Hernandez Hendrix stated she will miss the opportunity and</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	

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that the staff and the Board is a wonderful group of people. She will find ways to stay involved and have their back.

- C. Lederman began the group presentations. She stated that the Coalition has a monumental task. The two priorities are TANF and At risk. The standing question is what next priority should be. The group considered making TCC next priority with the concept being that they've been on welfare and so on. Families often go back and forth between the two groups. If the Coalition makes an investment does TCC really benefit from this? What percentage will stay employed and what have other coalitions done about this problem? Everything a matter of policy. The group had more questions and believed the issue is a difficult and important decision. They asked E. Torres and staff to really look and come back with recommendation.
- The second presentation was given by Y. Perkins. The group's suggestion was to incorporate an Early Learning Coalition of Miami-Dade/Monroe Foundation beginning the next week. As Board members' terms are up, they would have opportunity to serve this cause. She asked members currently on the Board to come up with a commitment of up to 5 donators and to avoid the Chamber of Commerce.

The Coalition would need a spokesperson who could be a celebrity, someone in community, or someone on the Board. This person would need to know our cause and mission and be able to sell what the Coalition is trying to achieve. They would not limit the foundation, but allow funds to go to wide reach of needs being completely unrestricted. The foundation needs grant writers and may need to start with volunteers. H. Mogul volunteered his time. N. Seijas suggested coming up with \$150,000 to put foundation together. They would approach The Children's Trust. They need the whole package put together in terms of what steps to take.

- ⇒ A. Eckstein inquired: in terms of being part of this foundation, are they going to market to Monroe County as well. Y. Perkins responded yes it is for both counties.
- ⇒ D. Lawrence stated that most of the money raised for Monroe will have to focus on Monroe and the same for Dade. They need to go about it very systematically and it will take real work to get it done.
- ⇒ D. Armstrong suggested using an external agency to fund completely external staff to avoid conflicts. Hire someone as a consultant to establish that process. They must take serious consideration so that everyone is not going after the same donors over and over. Create something unique to the

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	<p>Coalition. D. Lawrence believed the Coalition should spend a little money and get the information first.</p> <p>⇒ O. Verdeja pointed out that as long as the Coalition is perceived as the government then we will not get any money.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ S. La Villa gave the last presentation on quality versus quantity. . Both terms have great impact. However, unless we find money to increase minimum standards, then they can't go anywhere. The group wants advocacy; educating parents on what quality is; taking more legislative action; how can we change quality in the community. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⇒ D. Park stated that the state initially started out with some quality built in. The immediate issue is what to do with the money. Private money should not just be spent on quality initiatives but used for advocacy.</li> <li>⇒ N. Seijas responded that the Coalition already has the biggest advocacy group: providers and parents.</li> <li>⇒ D. Park believed the Coalition should be courageous and go for quality.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	
<p><b>NEXT STEPS</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ D. Armstrong stated that the Coalition needs to come up with an organizational structure first before attempting to ask people for money.</li> <li>▪ D. Lawrence responded that they first need to find out where other coalitions are. The Coalition should find out who does this work and spend a limited amount of money and do a real ascertainment process to answer questions. Determine the feasibility and then go ask for more money.</li> <li>▪ N. Seijas asked if there is something equal working with Monroe advocacy group. They are just more people with the same problems asking for the same solution. Something to consider is Dade and Monroe together.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>CLOSING STATEMENTS</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ O. Verdeja stated his concern that they have great a meeting and it doesn't go anywhere. He asked E. Torres to report back in regards to what is being done towards achieving these goals in three areas.</li> </ul> <p>Adjourn.</p>	

Signed and approved by:

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S. Herald, Board Secretary

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Date