



Minutes

Program & Strategy Committee Meeting
January 27, 2010; 1:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.
Early Learning Coalition of Miami-Dade/Monroe
Board Room
2555 Ponce De Leon Blvd Suite 500
Coral Gables, FL 33134

Committee Attendees: Elizabeth Bezos, Vice-Chair; Lucy Piñeiro, Esq.; Ramiro Moreno (via conference call); Roderick Beasley (via conference call); Dr. Silvia La Villa (via conference call)

Staff Attendees: Evelio Torres (President/CEO); Angelo Parrino; Blythe Robinson; Tabatha Cullen; Alina Soto; Jackye Russell; Yvette Medina; Bethany Sands; Jose Hernandez; Leeana Pena; Melody Thelwell; Aileen Martinez; Kristina Alonso; Maritza Fuentes; Natalia Delgado; Fred Hicks; Mercy Castiglione; Mary Williams (via conference call)

General Attendees: Marie Woodson, Miami-Dade County; Edith Humes-Newbold, Miami-Dade County; Ardene Estrada, Miami-Dade County; Ian Fleary, Department of Children and Families; Linda Carmona-Sanchez, Alliance for Early Care and Education; Katherine Mitchell, Skipper Chuck's # 4; Felicia Faust, Skipper Chuck's # 1; Linda Puloski, The Learning Tree Pre-school; Alex Perez, Goldstein, Schechter & Koch; Carlos Garcia, Goldstein, Schechter & Koch; Quadeera Teart, Betty's Preschool; Betty Teart, Betty's Preschool; Daisy Hensley, Miami-Dade County; Cynthia Hereford, Shining Light Childcare; Sherray Cato, Caran's Learning Nest; Josephine Akinbiyi, Bola Childcare; Terry Rutherford, Christ Children; Maritza Alonso, Miami-Dade County; Dr. Jesse Leinfelder (For Modesto Abety), The Children's Trust; Joan Farr, Miami-Dade County; Juanita Walker, Sheye's Learning Center; Cherise Gause, The Children's Place Child Care Center

I. Welcome and Introductions	Elizabeth Bezos Vice-Chair
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Vice-Chair, Elizabeth Bezos welcomed the committee members and attendees in the absence of chair, David Williams, Jr.▪ Ms. Bezos asked everyone to introduce themselves.▪ Ms. Bezos noted that there was no quorum.	
II. Approval of Agenda	Elizabeth Bezos Vice-Chair

- Elizabeth Bezos called for the approval of the agenda.
 - Due to no quorum, motion was tabled.



III. Approval of Aug. 29th, Sept. 9th, Sept. 30th and Dec. 2nd Minutes

Elizabeth Bezos
Vice-Chair

- Elizabeth Bezos called for the approval of the minutes for August 29th, September 9th, September 30th, and December 2nd.
 - Due to no quorum, motion was tabled.

IV. CEO Update

Evelio Torres, CEO

- Evelio Torres stated that there are approximately 27,500 School Readiness children enrolled, which has been the target for the last few months.
- A rate alignment which went into effect January 1st brings providers who have updated their market rates up to the maximum approved by the board. The new rates were effective January 1, 2008. This was not a rate increase, but an alignment that brings those providers that did not qualify for the last alignment up to the maximum approved by the board.
- Based on the reduction to our base allocation from the state, the enrollment target has been reduced to 26,900. It is expected that the base allocation of \$112 million dollars will remain the same for next year. ARRA dollars were used to supplement the reduced School Readiness budget. Between \$6 and \$6.5 million ARRA dollars will be rolled over to the next fiscal year which begins July 1, 2010. Rather than enrolling new children this year, the money was moved to next fiscal year to avoid having to disenroll.
- The coalition is working with members of local and statewide legislative delegations, all the early learning coalitions and the Early Learning Advisory Council to make sure that we advocate for the early learning budget which covers both VPK and School Readiness.
- The VPK program has been very successful. Mr. Torres thanked the Children's Trust for providing the \$200,000 used for marketing to promote the VPK program. Through the coalition's efforts and the dollars from the Children's Trust, the program now has the highest number of VPK students ever; well over 19,000 children. However, the contract with the state does not contain enough dollars to support the VPK program through the end of this fiscal year. As of April, there are no more dollars left in the grant. However, the state is obligated to pay for all the children in the VPK program. A letter from Dr. Brittany Birken of the Agency for Workforce Innovation was received which stated that the coalition is allowed to use part of next year's grant to fill in the deficit expected in April. This will cause a deficit for next year. However, the legislative budget request for next year includes all the dollars for VPK for last year and this year's deficit and for the anticipated deficit for next year as well. There is an anticipated concern of the state lowering the per student allocation that is paid to VPK providers similar to the reduction from last year along with a potential increase in class size. Mr. Torres asked that in addition to the coalition and local and state partners' efforts, providers efforts are needed to advocate.
- Linda Carmona-Sanchez stated that the Alliance for Early Care and Education will be traveling to Tallahassee during Children's week on March 3-4. The Alliance received additional funding allowing them to bring approximately 100 providers to advocate.
- Mr. Torres stated that President Obama has considered a \$1.6 billion dollar allocation to the Childcare Development Block Grant. These dollars would be distributed among all states. The coalition is working with the state to redefine the funding formula taking into consideration the cost of living in different counties and poverty rates.
- Linda Carmona-Sanchez asked if any outside individuals would be included when discussing the funding formula.
- Mr. Torres replied that while the process is usually done as a workgroup, he will suggest to Dr. Birken to open the discussion to public comments.



V. Monroe Update

Mary Williams

- Mary Williams presented the following figures for the Monroe County update:
 - 315 of the target of 450 ASQ's have been completed, year-to-date.
 - 59 of 85 ASQ's were completed timely for a 69% achievement rate.
 - 100% of the 35 children with valid "red flags" have received and Individual Improvement Plan
 - 100% of the 12 children with valid red flags with parental consent received the Battelle screen.
 - Of the 23 children without parental consent for the Battelle screen, 5 did not receive parental consent, 15 are already receiving services and 3 are pending consent.
 - The pre-assessment period was September - November in which 230 pre-assessments were completed.
 - The post-assessment period will be March - May, therefore reflecting no post-assessments completed.
 - In conjunction with Monroe's community partner, Florida Keys AHEC, 345 of the target of 450 child health screening have been completed. The initial round of health screenings were completed in December. The second round of screenings will take place in the spring.
 - 100% of the 57 providers have signed the provider agreements.
 - 19 family childcare homes have had an environmental assessment.
 - 311 of the target of 600 providers have had visits by the 2 Monroe classroom mentors.
 - 10 of the target of 24 provider trainings have been completed.
 - 4 of the 23 VPK providers have been monitored for a completion rate of 17%.
 - 401 of the target of 411 children have been enrolled in VPK.
 - 463 VPK certificates have been issued
 - 87% of children with VPK certificates issued have enrolled.
 - 691 children have enrolled in School Readiness
 - 105 Children are on the School Readiness waitlist
- Elizabeth Bezos asked if the reason that only 17% of VPK centers had been monitored was because someone new had been hired and trained.
- Mary Williams replied that monitoring only began in December.
- Linda Carmona asked why only 59 of the 85 ASQ's were completed timely and if there was something they could do to assist her in improving that rate.
- Mary Williams explained that it is an ongoing education process with the providers which Wesley House is assisting with.

VI. Monitoring Report

Carlos Garcia and Alex Perez

- Carlos Garcia introduced himself as a partner and Alex Perez as a manager of Goldstein, Schechter & Koch.
 - GSK is an accounting advisory consulting firm that has provided independent monitoring and compliance services to the Early Learning Coalition for approximately a year and a half.
 - GSK works to assist in setting the key goals with finance, administration and programs, etc. GSK is working with the ELC in order to develop a monitoring tool that will be used to check compliance throughout the year on an ongoing basis.
 - Once field work has been completed they discuss their initial findings with key management, check to see if there is any resolution and check for any missed findings.



- They provide formal quarterly reports in addition to informal monthly reports. One annual report is also issued summarizing the data from the previous quarterly reports.
- Alex Perez explained the findings of the previous year.
 - The biggest two components were VPK and School Readiness.
 - 120 files from each program were selected for eligibility compliance monitoring.
 - The majority of the findings, which Mr. Perez indicated were not very significant, were mostly missing documents and missing sign-offs.
 - For provider match payments there were no findings in VPK. In School Readiness the most common issue is the sign in/out sheets.
 - For the review of Resource and Referral, 70 “dummy calls” were made and there were findings in regards to service quality.
 - The same process was adhered to for Wesley House
- Evelio Torres said that AWI will start relying on this type of monitoring more and more. AWI will visit counties and coalitions with a lot less frequency. The monitoring tool that is being used by GSK meets all the requirement of AWI and will reduce redundancy.
- Angelo Parrino will add the quarterly GSK report to the Program and Strategy Agenda once a quarter.
- Yvette Medina introduced Maritza Fuentes and Natalia Delgado of the Quality Assurance department. She explained that this department conducts the monitoring for the other contracts that GSK does not monitor such as the Teenage Parent Program (TAPP), Refugee Services Program, and curriculum compliance which is part of the School Readiness agreement.
- Maritza Fuentes explained that the two main focuses of monitoring curriculum compliance is validating that a curriculum is in place that matches the one stated on the provider’s School Readiness provider agreement and verifying it meets the School Readiness standards. Findings have indicated that some of the centers that have stated that they are using Creative Curriculum are not utilizing it as intended. Many have blended various curricula and are calling it Creative Curriculum causing the concern that these centers are not complying with the School Readiness agreement. The Quality Assurance team will continue to monitor these centers and report the findings to both the director of School Readiness and to the curriculum compliance manager.
- Evelio Torres asked if technical assistance was being offered to these providers to which Ms. Fuentes replied that this type of assistance was being offered during the monitoring visits.
- Mr. Torres stated that there is a curriculum conference coming up in April inviting childcare providers and teachers to participate in discussions.
- Ms. Fuentes indicated that Quality Assurance is also verifying that the centers do have a signed provider agreement on file in addition to verifying curriculum compliance. ELC is also looking into offering curriculum training.
- Elizabeth Bezos added that it would be helpful to offer the curriculum training in Spanish as well as during times that are more accessible to providers such as weekends.
- Ms. Fuentes shared that for informal providers, which are not regulated by the Department of Children and Families, the QA department conducts health and safety screening in addition to verifying curriculum compliance. The general findings are that most informal providers do not have a developmentally appropriate curriculum in place for children birth to five years of age. She added that in the past informal providers were required to



take a 3-hour family childcare home regulation course. However, the new requirement is a 6-hour course. QA is providing information in regards to where providers can take the course. She also observed that several informal providers have chosen to no longer participate in the School Readiness program following a monitoring visit.

- Elizabeth Bezos asked if informal providers were required to complete the 6-hour course prior to becoming a provider.
- Ms. Fuentes replied that as of right now they are not required. However, Jackye Russell indicated that beginning this upcoming school year, they will be required to submit proof of the course with their provider agreement.
- Natalia Delgado described the function of the TAPP program as providing childcare services to teenage parents who are amidst completing their high school diplomas.
 - One of the findings in monitoring the TAPP program was that invoices with a deadline of the 15th of each month were not being submitted timely. A failure to submit this information in an effective manner causes issues with payment of invoices and questions about whether scope of services is being met.
 - The second finding is that files did not contain documented receipt of the participants' right to choose their child's provider. In addition the eligibility terms and conditions form is also not included as part of the file.
 - The third finding is that children determined eligible are not being enrolled in their choice of provider within ten (10) working days as stipulated in the contract.
 - The final TAPP finding indicates an inability to validate the changes of eligibility status and completing these changes in EFS within ten (10) working days. The concern is that the case notes did not accurately depict the eligibility status.
 - General comments include that immunization records and health exam forms were not being reviewed for expiration. Not all files contained a current application. Attendance signature forms for parents/guardians were found to be incomplete or prefilled. Files did not contain case notes within the eligibility period in question.
 - The accomplishment is that TAPP case files were being maintained in consistent order therefore allowing a very smooth review process.
- In response to a question posed in regards to what occurs when a sign-in/sign-out form has been prefilled, Edith Humes-Newbold explained that when this type of situation is brought to their attention, they will send a member of their QA staff, unannounced to monitor. If found to be a repeat pattern, the case is then referred to FDLE. Ms. Humes-Newbold stated that the county constantly provides trainings and reminders of this regulation.
- Ms. Humes-Newbold also commented that Miami-Dade county did respond to the findings in writing and would like to see the responses incorporated into the report. Ms. Humes-Newbold noted that some of the issues and concerns that were raised are out of the control of Miami-Dade because many of the documents are completed at the school board and not by the county. Ms. Humes-Newbold stated that perhaps the total process needed to be reviewed and the QA department needs to understand the entire process in order for the report to read as it should.
- Dr. Jesse Leinfelder asked if centers participating in the TAPP program had to be accredited as it was required in the past.



- Jackye Russell responded that the school board removed this requirement from their RFP for this year. The requirement now is that the center must be licensed.
- Maritza Alonso commended the QA department for their professionalism and their excellent working relationship with her department. Ms. Alonso added that in regards to the TAPP files, some of the measures that her department is being held accountable for are out of their control. The clients go to the TAPP office at the school board where they are being interviewed. Ms. Alonso recommended that the scope of the QA process includes the portion of the interview process that is handled by MDCPS.
- Lucy Piñeiro shared her observation that after several years of contracting the county to provide these services, only now will there be a review of their contract as a result of this monitoring.
- Yvette Medina replied that there has been some contract monitoring in the past however, the majority of the language pertains more to School Readiness than it does to TAPP.
- Evelio Torres added that a system to allow contractors to submit reports via the web is in development.
- Maritza Alonso mentioned that for the 300-500 files in both VPK and School Readiness, with over 30 criteria for monitoring in each, the county had an almost 100% clean audit.
- Natalia Delgado presented the findings in regards to the Refugee Program.
 - The first finding indicated that the files did not contain current referral forms for the eligibility period being monitored. The concern is that services are being provided with no referral from the VOLAG (voluntary refugee) agency. It is currently being addressed with the Department of Children and Families.
 - The second finding indicates that the Intake and Services forms required by DCF are not being filled out properly and contain information that is incorrect, misplaced or missing altogether. The concern is that inaccuracies on this form leads to conjectures.
 - The third finding addresses that not all files contain copies of immigration documentation (I-94 form). The concern is that the program eligibility is not being properly determined.
 - The final finding addresses that the Parental Rights and Responsibilities forms do not meet the Coalition's branding and/or publicity requirements. The concern is that the contractual agreement is not being followed.
 - General comments include that clients' overtime pay is being considered when calculating household income. The inclusion of overtime raises the clients' fee scale. Also, co-payments are not accurately being determined. In some cases referrals are not including match-dollar awards therefore it cannot be determined if the award was granted or not.
 - Accomplishments include that services were authorized for a 6-month period as required. Cases were re-determined before the end of the 6-month period. All clients who entered this US within 12 twelve (12) months of their intake date have all children accepted for child care services at initial determination. All files contained an LEP/Right to Translation Services Form. All files contained case notes in EFS.
- Elizabeth Bezos asked if overtime pay is currently being excluded.
- Yvette Medina responded that the practice through the years had been that, for example, if an individual is receiving a substantial pay increase during the holiday season, an employer can submit a note on behalf of the employee and then the case manager can waive it.



- Ms. Bezos also asked if this would also apply to other programs such as BG8.
- Ms. Humes-Newbold responded that for BG8 the law says you must calculate total income based on the documents provided. This would not apply to BG8.
- Ms. Medina clarified that based on her conversation with DCF this is an acceptable practice but she will check the ruling in order to clarify further.
- Maritza Alonso stated that while it is a practice it should be considered a standard. There is a total disconnect between the county and the employment provider and this presents challenges to serving the clients.
- Ms. Bezos added that if the purpose of this program is to assist these families in keeping consistency in their ability to work, we need to look at how the employment agencies are stubborn about giving out referrals or updating expiration dates that land in the middle of the authorization period. This causes the parent to have to take more days off from work.
- Ms. Alonso added that oftentimes this causes the client to lose their jobs.
- Ms. Bezos stated that these are Workforce offices. She recommends that this item be addressed with Rick Beasley who is the director.

VII. OEL Fiscal Desk Review	Angelo Parrino and Jose Hernandez
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Jose Hernandez presented the results of the OEL Fiscal Desk Review. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ As part of the AWI compliance monitoring procedure, a desk review was performed by pulling random samples of expenditures from both School Readiness and VPK. ○ There were 20-30 items evenly selected from the ELC and both of the central agencies, Miami-Dade County and Wesley House. ○ The samples are tested to ascertain whether the transactions are properly classified and whether the cost is allowable, reasonable and necessary. They also test to see that the transactions are properly reviewed and approved in accordance with ELC's internal controls. ○ Mr. Hernandez was pleased to announce that in the last four desk reviews, there were no findings. ○ Mr. Hernandez thanked his ELC colleagues, Miami-Dade County and Wesley House. He expressed his appreciation for the joint team effort. | |
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VIII. Eligibility Monitoring	Jackye Russell
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Jackye Russell presented the AWI Eligibility Monitoring report. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ This report is a comparison between 2008 and 2009. ▪ Elizabeth Bezos stated that there were three categories that had gone up and wanted to know if there was a corrective action plan in place. ▪ Ms. Russell responded that a more comprehensive correction action plan was sent to AWI as a result of the monitoring. The coalition is working with Miami-Dade County to make sure it is implemented. The plan is heavy on training of staff to address the findings that AWI identified. ▪ Edith Humes stated that the county is committed to training staff so that findings can be minimized. | |
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IX. Miami-Dade Update	Jackye Russell
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Jackye Russell presented the Miami-Dade update. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Ages and Stages questionnaires are on target. ○ Children who have red-flagged are being referred on an as needed basis. ○ Pre-assessments have concluded. ○ Post-assessments will commence in April. ○ There is discussion to reduce the enrollment target to 26,900. | |
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- There are 460 providers in Quality Counts of which 409 have received a baseline rating and 339 are on the QIP.
- VPK has over 19,000 children enrolled which is the highest enrollment to date.

X. Old Business

**Elizabeth Bezos
Vice-Chair**

- Jackye Russell stated that the Provider Agreement subcommittee looked at the 2010-2011 agreements and small changes were made. There was an addition to the agreement that addresses the service enrichment providers that provide programs such as karate, music, or tutoring. They are eligible to receive school readiness funding however, they have not been addressed in the agreement before. There are specific requirements they must meet in order to receive funding and will need to submit additional documentation next year in order to be approved. They will need to demonstrate that they are offering a program above and beyond their core program. There was also language added to the agreement that addresses that the realignment will take place on an annual basis. Lastly, this year the provider agreement process will be automated and providers will be able to submit agreements via the internet.
- Elizabeth Bezos recommended that a more in-depth and open discussion with child care providers take place to discuss whether service enrichment providers should receive school readiness funding at the same rate as licensed child care centers.
- Evelio Torres suggested that this topic be added to the Provider Services Committee meeting agenda.
- Mary Williams stated that in Monroe County there are very few options for child care and excluding service enrichment providers would greatly reduce options for these children.
- Linda Carmona shared her concern for the fact that such a long period of time passes between Provider Services Committee meetings.

XI. New Business

**Elizabeth Bezos
Vice-Chair**

- Linda Carmona suggested that the committee ask Mr. Verdeja to address the voting members of the committee not showing up therefore curbing the ability to make quorum and resolve agenda items. She suggested that after a certain number of absences, members should be invited to remove themselves and provide the opportunity to be replaced.

XII. Adjourn

**Elizabeth Bezos
Vice-Chair**

- Meeting was adjourned by Elizabeth Bezos on behalf of David Williams, Jr.