



Minutes

Program Policy & Strategy Committee Meeting
June 1, 2010; 3:30 p.m. – 5:30 p.m.
Early Learning Coalition of Miami-Dade/Monroe
Board Room
2555 Ponce De Leon Blvd Suite 500
Coral Gables, FL 33134

Committee Attendees: Dr. Silvia La Villa; Ramiro Moreno (via conference call); Elizabeth Bezos; Roderick Beasley; Modesto Abety; Jacqui Colyer

Staff Attendees: Evelio Torres (CEO); Blythe Robinson; Angelo Parrino; Jackye Russell; Pamela Hollingsworth; Roseline Philippe; Fred Hicks; Nicole Bardin; Milton Silvera; Kristina Alonso; Mary Williams (via conference call)

General Attendees: Linda Carmona (AECE); Edith Humes-Newbold (MDC); Daisy Hensley (MDC); The Hon. Isis Garcia-Martinez (City of Hialeah); Marielena Delgado (AECE); Isolina Souto (Tutor Me Day Care); Sue Lozelle (YMCA of Greater Miami); Silvia de la Torre (Town Center Pre-school); Armando Guerra (AECE); Maria I. Hernandez (RCMA); Charlotte Donn (YMCA); Ginette Rigaud (Our Little Ones); Ali Cao (Centro Mater); Melissa Davis (UWMD); E. Bizar (UWMD); Madelyn Rodriguez (Centro Mater); Carmen I Chao (Little Promises 3); Lourdes Ramos (Little Promises); Ana Rodriguez (Kids Small World); Susan Tucker (YMCA); Luisa Sanchez (YWCA); Pat Williams (YWCA); Lizette Sarra (YWCA); Annia Perez (Fantasyland 2); Julissa Mujica (Fantasyland 2); Yaribel Tellerio (Fantasyland 1); Amanda Silva (Fantasyland 1); Maria Zegerra (Fantasyland 1); Evelyne Fernandez (Fantasyland 1); Jose Castellanos (Fantasyland 1); Tiesha Thomas (Kids Choice Daycare); Elena Guerra (AECE/Small Wonders of Miami); Eileen Mahoney (YWCA); Dr. Vernon Jones II (B.L.A.M. Karate); Matty Loret de Mola (Learning Care Group); Olivia Hughes (Libby's Kiddie Care); Betty Delgado (AECE); Amina Rodriguez (AECE); Ross Fitzgerald (AECE); Irela Suarez (Watch Me Grow); Alfred Sanchez (YMCA); Martima Sanchez (YMCA); Steve Gimenez (YMCA); Jane Lindley (AECE); Hader Mahmoodi (Little Tigers Pre-school); Malorie Mercado (AECE); Linda Tablada (AECE); Cynthia Hereford (Shining Light Childcare Development Center); Rossana Velasquez (Lago Mar Preschools); Thelma Bennett (YWCA-Afterschool Program); Carmen Franco (Bamby's Day Care Center); Martha Hero (YWCA); Maria del Carmen Rodriguez (Just Kids Centers); Oramis Diaz (Just Kids Centers); Maria R. Esteban (Kids Paradise); Nicole Sparks (Sparks Daycare); Terry Rutherford (Christ Children Academy); Tran Burke (Transitioning Lives Center); Sherray Cato (Caran's Learning Nest); Marta Gomez (Fantasyland)



I. Welcome and Introductions

Dr. Silvia La Villa

- In the absence of Co-chairs, Dr. Silvia La Villa welcomed the committee, staff and attendees.
 - S. La Villa thanked the providers for attending and stated the importance of their support for the further discussion of an item that greatly impacts families, businesses and children. She expressed her appreciation for the signatures they have collected regarding the afterschool program item.

II. Approval of Agenda

Dr. Silvia La Villa

- S. La Villa called for the approval of the agenda.
 - Due to no quorum, motion was tabled.

III. Approval of April 27th and May 11th Minutes

Dr. Silvia La Villa

- S. La Villa called for the approval of the April 27th and May 11th minutes.
 - Due to no quorum, motion was tabled.

IV. CEO Update

Evelio Torres, CEO

- E. Torres stated that the coalition has received all but 201 provider agreements for School Readiness. 45 of these providers are currently serving School Readiness children. We have been trying to contact these providers via phone calls and certified letters to remind them that they must turn in their agreements in order to avoid interruption in payment. Agreements were due on May 15th.
- L. Carmona offered the assistance of the Alliance for Early Care and Education to assist in contacting these providers to turn in their agreements. E. Torres thanked her for her assistance.
- E. Torres stated that we are still working with the County to close the fiscal year which ends on June 30th. We are ending the year with 26,900 children enrolled. Starting July 1st, the new target is 26,000 children. Beginning in the 2011 legislative session we have about 6.5 million dollars less in our base budget. We will not feel the impact of this budget reduction until next fiscal year which begins on July 1, 2011, due to the stimulus dollars that were rolled over from last year. We will not know until May of 2011 what the allocation will be when the ARRA dollars are gone for the fiscal year that begins July 1, 2011. Not knowing what the final allocation will be, we are trying to manage the numbers so that we will not see a big drop in children in case the legislature does not restore the budget. E. Torres asks that we all continue to work together on legislative advocacy to try to continue to serve as many children as possible in the School Readiness program.
- E. Torres stated that we lost 0.5% of the reimbursement rate for VPK. We also lost some of the administration allocation which is now down to 4.5%. The state is facing a possible \$6 billion dollar deficit. We will need serious advocacy to make sure we receive an allocation that will at least allow us to serve the children currently enrolled in the School Readiness program.

V. Miami-Dade Update

Jackye Russell

- J. Russell presented the highlights of the Miami-Dade performance report.
 - 15,511 children out of a target of 20,000 (82%) have been screened using the Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ).
 - Of the 15,511 children screened, 1,702 have had confirmed red flags and have received Individual Improvement Plans (IIP).



- 82 children have been referred to Early Steps. 72 have been referred to FDLRS. 47 have been referred for behavioral issues. 155 have been referred for other issues such as speech concerns.
- 206 children of the target of 450 (46%) have received post assessment.
- In anticipation of the funding we will receive for the 2010-2011 school year, we looking at decreasing the enrollment target from 26,900 to 26,000 children to avoid having to disenroll children and to allow us to serve the children we currently have in care. The current enrollment is 26,893 children which continues to decrease as a result of natural attrition.
- 848 Children are enrolled in the Childcare Executive Partnership Program (CCEP).
- 1,418 School Readiness Provider Agreements have been received for the 2010-2011 school year. There are only 201 outstanding.
- As of May 24th there are 20,650 children on the School Readiness child waitlist of which 17,522 are children ages birth to 8.

VI. Monroe Update

Mary Williams

- Mary Williams presented the highlights of the Monroe county Performance Report.
 - 482 children have received an ASQ screening. 107% of the target of 450 has been reached.
 - 70% of ASQ's have been completed timely, within 45 days
 - 100% of children with red flags have received an IIP.
 - 100% of children with valid red flags and parental consent have received the Battelle screening.
 - 345 children have been screened. There will be a second round of screening in June and July to screen children that were missed in the first round.
 - 100% of Monroe providers have submitted a Provider Agreement.
 - 95% of providers have received an environmental assessment.
 - 536 provider visits have been completed.
 - 21 trainings provided by the classroom mentors have been conducted.
 - 100% of VPK providers have been monitored.
 - 421 children out of a target of 411 (102%) have enrolled in VPK. 481 VPK certificates have been issued.
 - 682 children are enrolled in School Readiness. The waitlist stands at 60.
 - 13 children are enrolled in the CCEP program.
- S. La Villa added that she and Dr. Gina Cortes-Suarez traveled to Key West and visited some of the sites that are experiencing the same issues that we are experiencing here in Miami-Dade County. The numbers are so small in the Keys that any cut to their budget is extremely impactful to their budget.

VII. Old Business /Public Comment

Dr. Silvia La Villa

- S. La Villa discussed the item concerning Child Enrichment Providers. She requested that Matty Moret de Mola present and discuss the petitions received by parents and providers against eliminating the afterschool programs. S. La Villa opened the floor for public comment.



- M. Moret de Mola stated that it is critical for some centers to have this program in order to stay in business. One of her centers has 60 after school children. In addition, the health and safety of the children that would not be able to participate in the program is the most concerning issue. The parents of these children also need this program as the large majority are working parents from low-income areas. Parents were very concerned when contacted individually and advised what was discussed in terms of the possibility of discontinuing afterschool care.
- A. Cao of Centro Mater stated that their organization has over 500 children in afterschool programs. Approximately 400 petitions were collected from parents that were informed of the impact of this decision.
- L. Carmona stated that what is important to underscore is that there are two separate issues at hand. There is the issue of how the Coalition is going to handle the enrichment providers. Separately, there is the issue of defining the mission of the Early Learning Coalition as being zero to five, even though Child Care Development Block Grant (CCDBG) funding covers zero to 13. L. Carmona stated her concern for the impact on working families. We forget that the purpose of subsidized childcare is to enable parents to work. The primary mission is economic self-sufficiency. When we begin to cut down age groups or limiting eligibility, we are making families unable to work. When families are unable to work, they become dependent on public assistance. L. Carmona presented 485 electronic signatures petitioning for this committee to reconsider any decision that would have a negative impact on afterschool care.
- A. Guerra stated that he is opposed to lowering the eligible age to five. The community has come out in support. It is great that we have quality in the centers, but we need to keep our children safe. We must really consider what we are proposing here.
- A. Sanchez of the YMCA of Greater Miami brought over 4,000 petitions from parents as well as community leaders who are very concerned about this issue. It is extremely important that we look at the long-term view of child development. It is arguably not the best use of funds to target just the zero to five age group and then invest hundreds of millions of dollars into these children to then cut them off at age five and send them out into the wild. Children will get into trouble and become victims of violence in the afterschool hours and all the money invested in them will go down the drain. We know there are limited funds out there but we need to make the best use of those dollars so they are not wasted.
- E. Maloney-Simon of the YWCA stated that the YWCA is known for providing quality, accredited early learning environments and was one of the first non-profit organizations to be accredited. We have seen the trend of the investment of dollars in the zero to five age group and recognize the importance. Once these children leave early care, they are embarking on a whole new life in a larger institution where the 1:10 ratio no longer exists. These children will need to learn a new way of learning without the benefit of a safe space in the afterschool where they might receive tutoring, have someone to talk to in a supervised environment. We will have invested so much money in zero to five only to see it lost from five to eight years of age. E. Maloney-Simon stated that the YWCA and YMCA went to the public school board in the 1970's, after a series of murders of young children in elementary school who were home alone; the latchkey child. They were the first in the country to have the public schools provide afterschool care on site. Providing quality infant and toddler care is incredibly expensive, far more expensive than what is reimbursed. We have to figure out ways to offset the cost. An investment that is being made in the five



year olds is going help to offset the cost of caring for an infant. 82% of black female head of households and 86% of Hispanic female head of households who are living at or below the poverty line are the women who are trying to work whose children will be affected by this decision.

- V. Jones of BLAM karate discussed the Adam Walsh case of 1981. This incident led V. Jones into working with crime prevention in the Monroe County Sheriff's Office and the U.S. Attorney's office. Times are far more difficult for children now than they were then and we really need to look at the impact cutting back on afterschool programs will have for these children. If it means cutting back on one hour of care daily in order to maintain his program and provide services to children, then so be it. He asks that the committee not make children walk home alone with no place to go.
- S. Lozell of the YMCA stated that the result of these afterschool funding cuts is that more children will be left behind. We will be cutting 10,000 kids from care in order to care for 5,000 kids zero to five who are on the waitlist. S. Lozell requested a definition of the waitlist. What will happen to those 5,000 children when they turn six? Research from the National Youth Violence Prevention Resource Center indicates that peak hours for juvenile crime is between 3 and 4 P.M, the hour most students are dismissed from school. In addition, juveniles are at the highest risk of becoming victims of violence between 2 and 6 P.M. In a survey of police chiefs, 86% agree that expanding afterschool childcare programs will greatly reduce youth crime and violence. 69% said that afterschool childcare programs are the most effective strategy for reducing juvenile crime; preferable to trying juveniles as adults, hiring more police officers and putting more metal detectors in our schools. The positive effects of quality afterschool programs are equally as compelling. Research specific to Florida shows that children who participate in quality afterschool programs have higher grades and GPA's, lower rates of serious disciplinary offenses including gang activity, use or possession of weapons, alcohol and drugs, in addition to a reduction in teen pregnancy, lower absenteeism at all grade levels, and lower drop-out rates. The bottom line is that these are the unintended consequences of this proposal.
- J. Russell explained that the School Readiness waitlist is for families seeking subsidized childcare in Miami-Dade County. A family can enter their child's name on a waitlist and when new enrollment opens, those names are pulled from the list in the order in which they went on the list and enrolled into care.
- S. Lozell stated that many of the children on the list may not even qualify for care and asked if a parent signs on to the waitlist 10 times, will they appear 10 different times on the list.
- J. Russell clarified that the number of families on the waitlist that the county has provided does not include duplicates. It is indeed an inquiry list and there are a number of families on the list who are not eligible for care.
- Jessica, a parent, shared that she disagrees with what is happening. She is disabled and is going to school in order to provide a better future for her daughter. She relies on the help she receives to assist in educating her child since she is unable to read. If it were not for this program, her child would have no one to help her learn and would have no chance at success. These programs need to exist in order to give children a fighting chance.
- S. La Villa thanked Jessica for sharing her story. She reiterated what L. Carmona said regarding the fact that there are two issues at hand that need to be discussed; enrichment programs and the mission of the Early Learning Coalition.
- E. Torres states that we are hoping to begin a strategic planning session which will provide opportunities for lots of public input. Any decision that will be made will be a difficult one particularly with budgets that are shrinking every year.



This will require a lot of discussion between board members as well as public input. He is sure that the board will take not only the petitions, but the public's comments into consideration when making this difficult decision. This process that we have taken on and these discussions are part of how we come up with creative solutions on how to make this work. It will take a number of months before a final decision is made, that will hopefully have the smallest impact on families, which is the number one priority. He reminded the public that this discussion started with child enrichment providers and was brought up by providers who wanted to have this be an agenda item for discussion by this committee.

- J. Colyer asked if there were family members in attendance who have children age zero to five on the waitlist.
- E. Torres stated that it is important to have all perspectives and they are an important group to hear from so that we listen to their comments as well.
- E. Bezos thanked all the providers and parents who attended today. It was a great sacrifice for everyone and it is greatly appreciated. E. Bezos reiterated that there are two distinct discussions here. The topic that was brought up by providers was the concern about enrichment providers who are not licensed or monitored as well as the safety of the children in their care, whether it was to ask them to comply with the same regulations or to eliminate them from the program completely. There was a tangent discussion that arose regarding eligible age. There was a motion brought up by Judge Lederman about only serving zero to five and the motion died with a unanimous vote not to move the discussion forward. E. Bezos asked that the record show that at the April 27th meeting over 30 providers who were in attendance, when polled whether they would survive without afterschool programs, all unanimously replied that they could not provide services to the younger children with the rate paid by the Early Learning Coalition without an afterschool program in their centers. In a discussion with Judge Lederman after that meeting, she mentioned that she visited and was very impressed with Liberty Academy located in Liberty City. E. Bezos stated that she spoke with Ms. Brazier of Liberty academy and asked how she is able to provide care for infants on what she is paid to which Ms. Brazier replied that she cannot provide care for infants at all. E. Bezos states that it is important that the board recognize that more than sustaining an industry, it's about collaboration with your service partners to make sure that they are there to help you in the end. Above being parents and providers that signed the petitions, we represent taxpayers of the community who are saying that eliminating afterschool care for children under 9 is wrong for this community.
- E. Bezos stated that they have brought up several out-of-the-box suggestions such as time limits for families who receive services, similar to TANF and other programs that assist families. But to tear families apart and only take care of the younger children and not the older and to reduce the number of available service providers is not the best thing for these families, nor is the way the taxpayers signing the petition want to have that money managed.
- E. Bezos shared that it is very concerning when a governing body is willing to throw away the definition of early childhood which is zero to 8 years of age according to NAEYC, associations of physicians, pediatricians, psychologists and known research. It is not in the mission of the Early Learning Coalition to redefine that. She urged the committee and the board to really think about how this community wants to manage this money.
- J. Colyer stated that there are thousands of children zero to 8 that never get into care. She stated that she lives in a community of children who never get the opportunity for care until age four when they are eligible for free VPK. She stated



that when she has to make this decision she is considering the fact every child in Miami-Dade County deserves to have had the opportunity to be in some of the great schools and centers of this community. It turns into a lottery of sorts when some children get in and thousands don't. There is no one in attendance at this meeting speaking for those children who never get off of the waitlist. She asks that the committee think about those children who do not hit the "lottery" and to think of ways to serve more children. There are creative ways that we can come to the table and figure out how to bring more children to the program. J. Colyer stated that as long as she is on this board she will continue to fight for children whose parents never get the opportunity to bring them to the YMCA and YWCA, etc.

- S. La Villa thanked J. Colyer for her input and stated that it is taken to heart, particularly for her as a provider who has served the Wynwood area for 34 years. She asks the board to take a long look at this and consider all perspectives. Miami-Dade County is the first to have a waitlist.
- M. Abety stated that he was around when we were fighting to get school readiness coalitions and to provide a focus from zero to five and to move the state in a direction that valued the areas of child development that take place at this age and the need for higher quality preschool services. We never fought for school readiness with the intent that funding come at the expense of children 6-12. We ought not to let the state legislature do this. Clearly there is a need for high quality services for children zero to five. There is also a need for children to have a safe place to go after school. Early childhood is being defined nationally as zero to 8 and there is good reason for that. He is opposed to reducing the eligible age of children. He stated that he believes the Early Learning Coalition should continue to fund children zero to 8 and address the need for higher quality standards for enrichment services and afterschool programs. Providers have come to this meeting with several suggestions on how to spread the funding to serve more children. This dialogue and discussion needs to continue amongst an alliance of this board, providers and parents.
- L. Carmona stated in response to J. Colyer's comments that we are all saying that children deserve access to high quality early care and education. Providers have made suggestions and some have not yet been tapped. She asks why the public school system has access to Title 1 money and in other communities across the country, this money is used for partnerships with community-based childcare centers to provide parent education and enrichment. Why do other communities have a version of the VPK program and they resource their teachers out as itinerant teachers to go out to childcare centers and teach. It improves the quality of the program in the centers and broadens the accessibility to more families and reduces cost by sharing costs among partners. We agree that we need to extend this opportunity for childcare services to as many as we can reach. L. Carmona asked if we took away limited funding as an issue, there would still be children that don't meet the eligibility criteria. Money is not the only issue and we need to look at how we qualify the criteria for eligibility. She stated that as a provider in the community she would like to see an opportunity to come to the table to work as partners in the strategic planning and come up with creative ideas to make it work.
- Arla, a single mother of 2, shared that one of her children who was diagnosed with ADHD and ODD attends an afterschool program. This program is not just a place where children simply go. The afterschool program her son attends has greatly helped him with his reading and controlling his temper. She does not believe he would be able to be alone at home given the disorders he suffers from. She stated that she and parents like her would not know what to do if they



had to leave their children at home alone while they work. She urged the committee to not remove the funding for afterschool program.

- E. Torres clarified that there has been no discussion at all about disenrolling any children currently in care.
- V. Jones of BLAM Karate stated that enrichment and exempt centers also rely on their afterschool programs for children receiving subsidized care. 60% of children at his center are enrolled in school readiness, 20% are private pay and the remaining 20% receive scholarships from his center. His center does not receive funding from any other sources. Since 2004, when his center received the exemption from DCF, he has had almost 2,000 children come through his program. His branch in Palmetto Bay serves only children with special needs. V. Jones stated that his staff can pass Level 2 background screenings, they provide SES, and his centers have become a resource for the public schools for children with discipline issues. He feels that programs like his should not be eliminated because of the valuable service it provides to children of the community. He asked providers to consider looking at matching some of their private pay slots with scholarships.
- M. Delgado asked E. Torres to clarify whether or not funding would stop at the end of the summer.
- E. Torres responded that it was agreed that a discussion will take place after the summer so that all of the children currently receiving services would remain in care, and if there are openings for other children they may also enroll in services at this time. A decision would not be made until there is an opportunity to set some priorities with public input as part of the strategic planning process. There has been no discussion to disenroll children. Right now, it is a matter of taking a look at the number of children currently being served, knowing that we may have to serve fewer children going forward and trying to set some priorities. We have to consider all the good ideas presented such as scholarships and partnerships. Using tax dollars, we all have a responsibility to try to do the best we can and stretch these dollars as much as possible.
- L. Carmona thanked E. Torres for making the process transparent, inviting providers to the meetings for discussions and posting as much information as possible. She asks that they consider a policy that includes more discussions before there are any votes on this particular issue.
- E. Torres clarified the process for voting and passing resolutions.
- J. Colyer requested that a sample be pulled from the waitlist to see if the children on the list actually qualify for services.
- E. Humes-Newbold stated that this is typically done every so often. In her experience approximately one-third actually qualify, while many of the remaining two-thirds have found care elsewhere or have moved out of the area. Duplicates are routinely removed from the waitlist.

V. Adjourn

Dr. Silvia La Villa

- S. La Villa thanked the providers in attendance for showing their support as well as the over 5,000 signatures that they collected.
- S. La Villa adjourned the meeting.