



Minutes

Program Policy & Strategy Committee Meeting
November 29, 2011; 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: The Hon. Cindy Lederman; David Williams, Jr. (via conference call); Shaleen Fagundo (via conference call); Ann Karen Weller; Roderick Beasley (via conference call); Ramiro Moreno (via conference call); Elizabeth Bezos (via conference call)

Staff Attendees: Evelio Torres (CEO); Jackye Russell; Mary Williams (via conference call); Kristina Alonso; Milton Silvera; Leana Pena; Blythe Robinson; Dr. Christine Hughes; Melody Thelwell

General Attendees: Linda Carmona-Sanchez (AECE); Marie Woodson (Miami-Dade County); Brian Sheafer (YMCA)

I. Welcome and Introductions

- C. Lederman welcomed the committee and attendees.
 - A quorum was established with five (5) voting members.

II. Approval of October 25th Minutes

- S. Fagundo moved to approve the October 25, 2011 minutes.
- A.K. Weller seconded the motion.
- Motion was unanimously passed.

III. CEO Update

- E. Torres shared the CEO update.
 - The coalition office recently suffered damage due to flooding. While some accommodations and adjustments have been made, the coalition is fully operational at this time.
 - The legislative session begins in January and will focus on redistricting issues. E. Torres will be attending a workgroup meeting chaired by Alan Abramowitz taking place in Tallahassee with Secretary Wilkins as well as private sector individuals who will provide advice on how to move forward with childcare services in Florida. There is some discussion about removing the Office of Early Learning from the Department of Education and potentially moving it under the Department of Children and Families which is an idea we do not agree with. We are currently making sure that we continue to make progress with our Quality Rating Improvement System (QRIS). The auditor general's report which will be final in December is recommending that we create a statewide QRIS if we receive the Race to the Top funding. We would not be able to achieve this if we are working under a department that has so many other very important priorities. There are many people advocating to keep the Office of Early



Learning under the Department of Education. Our programs are educational programs with very specific outcomes with an expectation that children will be learning while in child care.

IV. Monroe Performance Report

- M. Williams shared highlights from the Monroe performance report.

V. Miami- Dade Performance Report

- J. Russell gave highlights from the Miami-Dade performance report.

VI. Quality Standards Workgroup Report

- J. Russell stated that the Quality Standards workgroup reviewed the feasibility study that was done by Chris Duggan. The workgroup asked for additional information including figures showing what other coalitions are paying providers. Miami-Dade is right in line with other coalitions.
- J. Russell shared information on reimbursement rates across the state.
- J. Russell stated that the workgroup also asked to see what the market rates around the state, as well as what the cost associated with doing environmental assessments would be. This information will be provided to the workgroup at the next meeting.
- E. Bezos asked if the workgroup looked at School Readiness rates in conjunction with VPK rates. This would give a more accurate representation of how much money is coming into those classrooms.
- J. Russell responded that she would take this information back to the workgroup.

VII. Old Business

- E. Torres discussed Florida statute 1002.66, a bill from 2010 regarding specialized instructional services for voluntary prekindergarten children with disabilities. The statute essentially allows parents of children with special needs to use their VPK allocation to acquire specialized instructional services. Some parents may find themselves having to make a decision on whether to buy the specialized services or place their children in a VPK program. OEL is now going through the rulemaking process and there was some discussion about some of the complications that might arise.

VIII. Public Comment

- L. Carmona stated that the heart of the issue with Florida statute 1002.66 is really whether or not VPK is an educational program. In terms of legislation, the language exists to support the fact that it is an educational program whose purpose is to prepare children for success in kindergarten and beyond. But if we are looking at it as an educational program, then why is it acceptable to have a different set of standards for VPK students than for regular K-12 students. If there is a student who is diagnosed with a disability and receives an IEP, that student is entitled to a free and appropriate public education paid for out of the Base Student Allocation And any additional services and supports that the child might need are funded through IDEA, ESOL, etc. What this piece of legislation is saying is that a parent will have a need to choose between one or the other which creates a problem. There is no mechanism within the VPK system to provide support services. There is also an issue with measuring accountability with FLCKRS. How can you measure across math, science, language and cognitive development if the child is only receiving physical, speech and occupational



therapy with VPK dollars? Child care providers will not want to take on these children because it would bring their scores down and then be considered Low Performing Providers. There are a lot of consequences to the issue of having to choose between an education or related services. This would never be an issue for children in K-12. This legislation is forcing parents to choose and it is not right.

IX. Adjourn.

- C. Lederman adjourned the meeting.