



# Minutes

Program Policy & Strategy Committee Meeting  
February 22, 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:** The Hon. Cindy S. Lederman, Co-Chair; Elizabeth Bezos, Vice Chair (via conference call); Dr. Silvia La Villa; Modesto Abety; Roderick Beasley (via conference call); Lucy Piñeiro (via conference call)

**Staff Attendees:** Evelio Torres (President/CEO); Blythe Robinson; Angelo Parrino; Maria Kuhn-Brotton; Sandra Gonzalez; Nicole Bardin; Pamela Hollingsworth; Jackye Russell; Roseline Philippe; Bethany Sands; Kristina Alonso; Leeana Pena

**General Attendees:** Marisela Elias-Miranda (MDCPS); Linda Carmona; Ardene Estrada (Miami-Dade County); Edith Humes-Newbold (Miami-Dade County); Joan Farr (Miami-Dade County); Daisy Hensley (Miami-Dade County); Ivy Martinez (Miami-Dade County); Suzette Frazier (via conference call)

<b>I. Welcome and Introductions</b>	<b>The Hon. Cindy S. Lederman Co-Chair</b>
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- C. Lederman welcomed the committee, staff and attendees and informed attendees that she would now be co-chairing this committee.
- A quorum was established with four (4) voting members.

<b>II. Approval of Agenda</b>	<b>The Hon. Cindy S. Lederman Co-Chair</b>
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- C. Lederman approved the agenda.

<b>III. Approval of Aug. 29<sup>th</sup>, Sept. 9<sup>th</sup>, Sept. 30<sup>th</sup>, Dec. 2<sup>nd</sup>, and Jan 27<sup>th</sup> minutes</b>	<b>The Hon. Cindy S. Lederman Co-Chair</b>
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- C. Lederman called for the approval of the meeting minutes from August 29<sup>th</sup>, September 9<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup>, December 2<sup>nd</sup> and January 27<sup>th</sup>.
  - M. Abety moved to approve the motion.
  - Motion was seconded by L. Piñeiro.
  - Motion was unanimously passed.

<b>IV. CEO Update</b>	<b>Evelio Torres, CEO</b>
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- E. Torres stated that the biggest issue on the table is funding and what is happening in the legislature.
  - Concerns for VPK include trying to make sure that the legislature allocates enough dollars to cover the state-wide deficit from last year. The deficit from last year and this fiscal year combined is \$28.6 million. There is also a \$38 million



hole that will need to be covered as these dollars were replaced with stimulus (ARRA) dollars. Starting next fiscal year, beginning July 1<sup>st</sup>, it is estimated that 15,000 new children will enroll in the VPK program state-wide. While it greatly benefits both providers and children, this will create an additional \$42 million deficit. In total a restored \$108 million is needed for the VPK program.

- The legislative budget request from AWI has a minimum of 2.5 million dollars in order to meet the minimum federal match requirement. There is an additional \$38 million being requested aside and apart from AWI to restore the School Readiness budget. If we are unable to secure approximately \$141 million, we will have to see disenrollment in the School Readiness program. There will need to be strategic planning to come to some difficult decisions regarding the possibility of eliminating or reducing the scope of services of some of our programs, placing limits on the amount of time a family can participate in a program and changes to the qualifying age range,
  - The coalition is working with the Florida Children’s Services Council, The United Way, other coalitions, the Early Learning Advisory Council, The Florida Chamber, and the Alliance for Early Care and Education as well as other provider groups to plan a field trip taking 2 busloads of providers up to the capital in March for a large advocacy effort on the capitol steps.
  - The president has requested that \$1.6 billion be added to the Childcare Development block grant. If that budget process gets approved there will be additional School Readiness dollars in Florida.
- E. Bezos asked there would be a meeting to revive the Legislative Committee in order for everyone in the community to be on the same page prior to going to Tallahassee. E. Torres responded that the Executive Committee has decided to eliminate this role so instead they are staying on top of legislative issues.
  - E. Bezos also asked if an opportunity will be given to providers to participate in the discussion. E. Torres advised that all meetings are posted on the website and that some legislative advocacy trainings are scheduled in both Monroe and Miami-Dade Counties at the beginning of March.

<b>V. Meeting Schedule</b>	<b>Jackye Russell</b>
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- J. Russell asked the committee if it would proceed with the proposed meeting schedule.
- E. Bezos expressed concern for the late time of the day which is difficult for providers to attend.
- C. Lederman asked and received agreement that the committee would move forward with the proposed schedule and see how it goes.

<b>VI. Miami-Dade Update</b>	<b>Jackye Russell</b>
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- J. Russell presented highlights from the Miami-Dade Performance Report.
  - Year to date, 58% of target children have been assessed using the Ages and Stages questionnaire. Of those assessed children, 1041 received confirmed red flags and have all received an IIP. Children who continue to have concerns have been referred for additional services.
  - 110% of children have been pre-assessed using the LAP-D. Post assessments with not begin until April.
  - The School Readiness enrollment target was decreased to 26,900 in order to be able to continue to keep children enrolled with the dollars available this year. The current enrollment is 27,344 but a reduction is anticipated through natural attrition.
  - 772 children are enrolled in the CCEP program.



- 19,400 children are enrolled in the VPK program; the highest level of enrollment since the program began. Funds from next year's budget have been used in order to pay for the children enrolled for the remainder of the year.
  - 25,478 children are on the School Readiness waitlist, of which 21,303 are ages birth to 8.
- L. Carmona asked if the full-page ad in the newspaper regarding the CCEP program generated any interest. E. Torres responded that while there were inquiries employers were apprehensive to participate due to the increased cost of additional benefits for their employees, given the state of the economy.

<b>VII. TAPP Program</b>	<b>Jackye Russell</b>
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- J. Russell defined the TAPP program as a program funded by Miami-Dade County Public Schools to provide childcare for teenage parents that are attending school. There was much discussion at the last board meeting because the RFP for TAPP did not include a requirement that the children be placed in accredited centers.
- A geographic breakdown was provided indicating the location of accredited centers in relation to where the parents attend school and live.
- E. Torres stated that there were follow-up discussions with the school system regarding how to approach the process and proceed given the lack of an accreditation requirement in the contract.
- L. Carmona expressed that the decision to require that children be placed in accredited centers was well intended but somewhat misguided. The TAPP program was intended to remove childcare as a barrier to high school education attainment. Moving children to accredited centers would add the barrier of transportation
- M. Abety asked if there was a way to determine which of the 3, 4, and 5 star centers have vacancies. E. Torres explained that each individual center must be called to obtain that information.
- E. Torres asked if the contract with the school system would be amended or if the school system wanted an opportunity to review the data before coming to a decision.
- M. Elias-Miranda responded that they would like to review the data and see what centers have slots available in proximity to the high schools.
- E. Bezos asked if any of the children were placed in childcare homes or relative caregivers. J. Russell responded that only licensed childcare homes were eligible since relative caregivers are not licensed.
- E. Humes-Newbold expressed the importance of parental choice, adding that often times the parent or grandparent of the teenage parent is making the choice regarding childcare. While it is important to place these children in high-quality, accredited centers, parental choice must be respected.
- C. Lederman asked to keep this on the agenda to discuss updates and issues.

<b>VIII. Low Performing VPK Providers</b>	<b>Roseline Philippe</b>
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- R. Philippe discussed the VPK Readiness Rate and low performing providers (LPP).
  - This is the fourth VPK readiness rate period, becoming final on February 26, 2010.
  - VPK Statute explains that all children who go through the VPK Program will be assessed within the first 30 days of entering kindergarten.



- Two types of assessments are done consisting of an observation portion and a letter naming/recognition portion. For three years this portion was done through a DIBELS assessment. This year the FAIR (Florida Assessment for Instruction in Reading) is being used by the Department of Education (DOE.)
- Prior to readiness rates being published, providers must verify names of children as well as number of absences and hours attended.
- Providers had 14 days to submit a dispute to the DOE.
- L. Carmona stated that there are serious flaws within the VPK assessment process. Without both a pre and a post test, a snapshot in time 6 weeks after a child begins kindergarten does not reflect any learning gains as a result of the program.
- S. La Villa questioned why the DOE would change one of their assessment tools on the fourth year and expressed that it is ethically beyond explanation.
- M. Abety asked what the stakes are related to centers who are not passing. R. Philippe responded that after the second consecutive year that they do not meet the requirement, their curriculum will be evaluated and if it is not one approved by the DOE, the provider will have to purchase, receive training for, and implement one that is approved. After the third consecutive year of LPP status, which is equivalent to a fourth school year, the DOE would determine that the provider can no longer participate in VPK.
- M. Abety asked that since the test changed this year, do the curricula on the approved list teach to the new testing structure. R. Philippe responded that it does not.
- M. Abety asked if the new test is culturally competent for Hispanic, African-American and Haitian Creole-speaking children. R. Philippe responded that there are two assessments. The observation portion looks at whether the child can follow directions, share with others, take turns, etc. The second portion only requires that the child identify 8 letters of the alphabet.
- E. Torres stated that if a child answers the letter name in a different language it would be marked as incorrect. He also stated that most experts would not consider the test culturally sensitive.
- E. Bezos stated that assessments are not culturally sensitive nor are sensitive to children with special needs. Since there is no pre-test, it is possible that a child scores very low but has significant educational gains throughout that year.

<b>IX. Quality Counts Update</b>	<b>Pamela Hollingsworth</b>
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- P. Hollingsworth presented the highlights of the Quality Counts Program.
  - Quality Counts has just celebrated its two year anniversary. During this period of time there were 460 programs put into the system.
  - 409 providers have received a baseline rating. Of those providers, 51 are at some stage of the Quality Counts process. 339 providers have a quality improvement plan in place.
  - 70 programs have been formally star rated and 21 programs have converted their baseline rating.
  - 24 providers have an increased star level. 17 increased by 1 star, 6 increased by 2 stars and 1 increased 3 stars.
  - 13 providers decreased 1 star level.
  - 33 providers maintained their star levels.
- M. Abety stated that 46 out of 70 programs participating either decreased or did not improve. He asked to what can this be attributed. P. Hollingsworth explained that part of this can be attributed to the space within a rating. A program that was



previously a very low “1” can now be a very high “1.” There were also programs that were only 1 point away from a new star level.

- L. Carmona asked if a very low star rating can be attributed to the lack of professional qualifications of the staff. L. Carmona also stated that this is an industry suffering from extremely high turnover rates and wanted to know if this has any effect on scores as well. P. Hollingsworth acknowledged that the turnover does exert some influence over the scores. However, the Quality Counts Career Center has made great strides with professional development.
- N. Bardin stated that the Environmental Rating Scales (ERS) section typically is not related to staff qualifications. Miami-Dade County’s staff turnover in early childhood education is well below the national average with Quality Counts providers reporting less than 40% turnover.
- E. Torres added that one of the questions they are struggling with is how long a provider can stay in the program if they appear to not be making any improvement or moving up a star level.
- P. Hollingsworth added that Quality Counts also provides accreditation facilitation as well. There are 116 programs that are in the accreditation pipeline.
- P. Hollingsworth discussed the Great Beginnings Scholarships awarded by the Quality Counts Career Center. Well over 4000 scholarships have been awarded for courses such as “Mind in the Making” that focus primarily on toddler care.

<b>X. Provider Monitoring</b>	<b>Jackye Russell</b>
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- J. Russell stated that Miami-Dade County’s quality assurance unit, as well as the ELC’s quality assurance unit have begun monitoring provider sites. There are already findings of non-compliance. The provider agreement requires that providers be in compliance with all of the requirements of the program. When a provider is found to be out of compliance, the steps set out in the agreement will be followed including providing technical assistance. If the provider is still unable to comply they will be placed on a 60-day corrective action plan. If they are still unable to come into compliance after the 60-days a review is completed and the coalition may take steps to terminate the agreement. In addition to this information being in the provider agreement, it will also be sent out via news alert. .

<b>XI. New Business</b>	<b>The Hon. Cindy S. Lederman Co-Chair</b>
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- L. Carmona asked the committee to consider proposing a provider appreciation day. L. Carmona suggested May 1<sup>st</sup> as it is Worthy Wage Day.
- L. Carmona stated that her organization was able to secure a grant to conduct a study of the economic impact of the childcare industry on Miami-Dade County, in collaboration with Florida International University (FIU) Research Institute on Social Economic Policy. L. Carmona requested that FIU be able to present the findings to the committee and the Board and perhaps to the Trust.
- S. La Villa stated that the Alliance for Early Care and Education is planning to have two buses travel to Tallahassee March 23-24.

<b>XII. Adjourn</b>	<b>The Hon. Cindy S. Lederman Co-Chair</b>
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- Meeting was adjourned by C. Lederman.