



Charlie Crist
Governor
Monesia T. Brown
Director

Agency for Workforce Innovation Office of Early Learning (OEL)

November 28 & 29, 2007
Early Learning Advisory Council Meeting
DoubleTree Hotel
Orlando, Florida
4:00p.m. – 6:00 p.m. on the 28th
8:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. on the 29th
or until completion of business

These minutes summarize the meeting discussion of the Early Learning Advisory Council. The minutes do not include all issues discussed. An audiotape or CD of the meeting is the official record and is available to all interested parties upon request.

Attendance: Big Bend, Broward, CNBB, Duval, Escambia, Flagler/Volusia, Heartland, Gateway, Hillsborough, Lake, Manatee, Miami-Dade/Monroe, Northwest Florida, Okaloosa/Walton, Orange, Osceola, Pinellas, Polk, Putnam/St. Johns, Santa Rosa, St. Lucie, House Representative

I. Welcome (Rich Morrison, Chair, Early Learning Advisory Council)

Chair Morrison began the meeting by welcoming the Council and asked Mr. Pruitt to highlight the events of the discussion session the night before. Mr. Pruitt's highlights included the following:

- The Council decided to focus on where to go and move away from where the Council has been.
- The Council shared an interest in discussing early learning curriculum and the possibility of changing current guidelines.

Chair Morrison then asked the Council for reaction to the new meeting format the evening before. Responses included the following:

- Continue with the open forum format
- Provide bullet points on action items or follow-up items needed
- Add more time to speak "Chair to Chair"

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Chair Morrison suggested that the next meeting planning time, separate from the open forum. He also suggested that members meet regionally to discuss what works and what doesn't work in each coalition. It was suggested that if meetings could be scheduled with legislators or if a committee schedule could be obtained at the March meeting the preference would be to meet in Tallahassee.

Mr. Morrison offered the Council several issues to think about:

- Where does the Council need to go and what changes need to be made in early learning.
- How to best get the Council's issues and concerns to the Children and Youth Cabinet.
- Suggest committees meet to recommend changes in structure in VPK and early learning as well as recommendations that can be put together in a legislative package.

II. Agency Director Update (Barbara Griffin, Deputy Director, Agency for Workforce Innovation)

Deputy Director Griffin began her update by speaking about how informative the open forum format the evening before was and encouraged the Council to discuss strategic planning at the next meeting. She also gave updates on the following:

- **Children and Youth Cabinet:** The Cabinet will be presenting Strategic Principles in January to the Governor. The next meeting of the Children and Youth Cabinet will be on December 5th in Tallahassee. At this meeting the Cabinet hopes to crystallize the broad strategic vision. Deputy Director Griffin reminded everyone that Director Brown and Chair Toni Crawford both sit on the Cabinet and can take the Council's issue to the Cabinet.
- **Monitoring:** The OEL monitoring team has made significant progress in continuing the improvement of the monitoring process. The team has listened to concerns and there are key actions taking place. The Agency pledges to work with the coalitions to make monitoring principled and value-added. The Agency is currently in the process of:
 - creating a common document repository that will be completed by the end of January and ready to share with the coalitions by the end of June
 - working with each coalition to find the best system when creating monitoring schedules
 - summarizing findings and producing routine publications on common concerns found within the coalitions
 - ensuring that monitoring is aligned with coalition plans
- **Agency for Workforce Innovation's Office of Early Learning Director Search:** Deputy Director Griffin announced Dr. Brittany Birken as the new Director of the Office of Early Learning. Deputy Director Griffin stated Dr. Birken possesses the qualities the Agency is looking for in a new Director; possessing a genuine commitment to early learning, understanding the nature of collaboration and common solutions, taking input and coming up with a plan to execute, and using their own vision and contributions of others to move the system forward.

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One chairperson suggested having discussion in March on a comprehensive look at training for parents and welfare reform and all early learning issues in their totality not just what is happening in the classroom.

III. Current Educational Service Delivery Models

Three presentations were given on three different coalition service delivery models. The presentations are briefly described below.

In-house Services (Andrew Bible and Anne Bouhebant with the ELC of Heartland)

Background:

- Forty-seven approved positions across the four counties. Each county has an office. This is key to making them accessible to providers and parents.
- December of 2003 the Charlotte and DeSoto Board decided to bring services in- house.
- Services were brought in-house July 2004.
- July 2005 the Charlotte/DeSoto and Highlands/Hardee Coalitions merged with the one provision that all services needed to be brought in-house.

Benefits:

- United by one system (EFS) therefore it is easier access to data
- Easier access to inventory
- Reduction in travel cost
- Quality control information readily available
- Internally monitor all programmatic functions
- Greater transparency

Challenges:

- Increase in number of staff
- Maintaining consistency across the four offices
- Initially finding building space to accommodate staff
- Initially moving to EFS

Role of Board:

- Adheres to role of governance
- Executive Director takes policies crafted by the Board and translates them to operating procedures.

Contracted Services (Harry Duncanson and Penny Westberry with the ELC of Broward)

Background:

- Decision was made from conception to contract services
- The coalition was lucky to have a very good contractor, Family Services
- Initially had one large contract and a smaller contract with School Board
- Currently there are six contract areas with three service providers
 - Resource and Referral and Family Education and Support
 - Eligibility determination, application processing, slot management, provider payment

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- Quality improvement support
- Quality Assurance
- Screening and Assessment
- Florida First Start Parent Education and support services

Benefits:

- Allows them in operations and governance to define a role as coordinator, planner, funder, and overseer rather than day to day operations.
- If the coalition was the implementer there may be a conflict within the roles listed above
- Allows the coalition to easily maintain the roles listed above

Challenges:

- Ensuring services are delivered
- Ability to deal with changing requirements
- Coordinating the different delivery partners
- Making sure all services are implemented

How to address challenges:

- Have one strong set of deliverables
- Create contracts with flexibility
- Make formal coordination efforts
- Communication flow

Mixed Services (Steve Southerland and Lynne Eldridge with the ELC of Northwest Florida)

Background:

- January 2003 Bay County Coalition merged with three rural coalitions
- April 2003 Multi-County Coalition merged with the Contracted Service Provider (Early Education and Care)
- July 2005 three more rural counties merged with Coalition creating a seven county coalition
- September 2005 Coalition separated from the contracted service provider

Benefits:

- Community Focus – Diverse community needs require diverse service delivery strategies maintaining focus on one purpose
- Comparability Focus – Ability to compare subcontractor service delivery and outcomes to Coalition directed service and service outcomes
- Ability to begin comparison studies of Coalition and subcontractor service cost using unit cost/performance based contracts
- Ability to focus on child issues rather than dealing with large staffing issues and overhead costs. This becomes the subcontractor's responsibility
- Infrastructure and service delivery change is difficult
- Ability to maintain valuable community relationships or connections.

Challenges:

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- Coalition purpose alignment
- Confusion on who does what
- Control – minimal control of subcontractor's service systems
- Change – Services not meeting intended outcome and ability to deal with changing requirements
- Child Care Versus Early Learning – Infrastructure and Service Delivery changes difficult to implement in someone else's organization

After the presentations, Chair Morrison opened the floor for questions. Many questions dealt with different ways to measure efficiency. One request was for consistent definitions or parameters to be established for direct services and what is being counted as overhead. Other discussion revolved around items to be added to the Service Delivery matrix that was provided to members including the total number of children served, the roles and functions of staff, and grant allocations.

Chair Morrison encouraged the Council to meet with each other by size or geography and share information and vision to try and drive early learning forward. Chair Morrison also reminded the Council to properly notice these meetings publicly to abide by the Sunshine Law.

IV. Transitioning

Deborah Denys, chair of ELC of Flagler/Volusia

All services are in-house

Why transition: Concerns with contracted service provider

Amount Saved: \$400,000 in Administrative Activities

Warning Signs: Observed contracted service provider's fiscal condition

Benefits:

- Easier access to data
- Control over quality dollars
- Problems can be corrected immediately, particularly in client services

Words of wisdom:

- Must have a great relationship with the Executive Director
- Must be willing to go to the extreme.
- Must have a clause in the ITN that will cover the coalition if any or all services are brought in-house
- Be prepared to take services in-house in any amount of time
- Families must be served so have several plans continue services to fall back on
- Server is the biggest issue, make sure the coalition has control over the server
- Ensure the contracted service provider does not disrupt data while the transition is taking place

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- Take over the conversion of the software in the financial area
- Consider staffing issues carefully
- A match agreement that says the coalitions can decide to take specific functions
- Have a transition plan
- Community relationships can assist greatly

Melissa Murphy, ED of ELC of Brevard

Why transition: Financial issues with the contracted service provider

Amount Saved: \$325,000

Benefits:

- More control over quality of services
- Focus on coalition responsibilities rather than complaints and problems
- Improved staff morale

Words of Wisdom:

- Must have access to EFS
- Must have access to the server
- Notification to all stakeholders and affected parties
- Think about office space and staff training
- Transition of files and records condition of the records

Chair Morrison suggested that each Council member create a document to tell the rational of why the coalition is using their current model and asked those that have transitioned to detail the particular concerns that had drove them to the transition, what where the key performance indicators that were used in identifying the problems, what were the issues that were identified as a problems in transition. Chair Morrison stated these documents could be used as a resource to the group as well as individually.

Chair Morrison ended by requesting that Director Birken explain the remaining document within the provided folders. Director Birken stated the remaining document was a transition assistance document. When creating this document OEL worked with Executive Directors to determine issues coalitions should consider when contemplating a change in service delivery. This document can be used as a checklist. Director Birken stated that OEL will expand both this document and the Service Delivery Document and resubmit for Council review.

V. Agency Partner Updates

Department of Education

Shan began by handing out a document on the status of 2006-2007 Low Performing VPK Providers. Within this document was a chart on the low performing providers, a timeline for activities related to 2006-2007 Provider Readiness Rate and the VPK Provider Kindergarten Readiness Rate Rule.

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Chair Morrison opened the floor for discussion. During the discussion the issue of how varied communities are arose. The Council stated their preference to have input on draft rule language earlier in the process. Director Goff committed to present rule language and the future readiness rates and Rules beforehand with the Council.

Department of Children and Families

Director Russo began by handing out a document that charted the upcoming rule changes for Child Care violations. In 2006, SB 1510 was passed. This will ensure standards are enforced the same statewide with all child care providers. Once the rule is promulgated providers will have every non-compliance issue classified. This is currently what occurs, it is just not posted. The providers highlighted there are issues out of their control and could lose their license due to these instances. Because of this there is a there is an additional category: Health and Immunizations. This additional category will allow the providers to not have their licenses revoked due to a noncompliance in this issue.

Chair Morrison asked if DCF had a proactive and systematic way to notify the coalitions when one of their providers has a violation. Ms. Russo stated that all providers have access to their database which contains this information. Chair Morrison expanded the question by suggesting there should be a proactive and systematic approach to notify the coalitions. If DCF is the one who id the problem shouldn't that agency take on the responsibility of reporting the issue to the coalitions instead of relying on them to look up the information. Chair Morrison stated his preference would be for DCF to push the information to the Coalitions. Ms. Russo stated she will check with DCF's IT department to see if a "trigger" through an email could be set up within their system.

V. Wrap Up

Chair Morrison wrapped up the meeting by asking the Council for their preference on location for the next meeting. No consensus was reached.

Chair Morrison ended the meeting by tasking the Council with the following:

-Between now and January get committee together or at least individually come up with three things that should be changed to improve VPK and Early Learning that the legislators need to see and forward them to Dr. Jurado.

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