



# MINUTES

## Monroe County Advisory Committee Meeting

March 14, 2023

ID: 872 8783 1522

Passcode: 283785

**Committee Attendees:** Sandi Bisceglia, Aleida Jacobo, Sue Ellen Bennett, Marla Russell, Lisa Taylor

**Committee Absentees:** Gilda Ferradaz

**Attendees:** Christine Patterson, Kris Gregory, Evelio Torres, Angelo Parrino, Anabel Espinosa, Pamela Hollingsworth, Laurie Dunn, Jose Hernandez, Daniel Armstrong, Ana Sejeck, Jeff Hurst, Jacqueline Dominguez, Sandra Gonzalez, Mercy Castiglione, Laura Toman, Victor Caballero, Michele Morgan, Ahmed Mitwalli, Fiorella Altare Christie, Chuck Mohr and Paloma Lopez-Barcena

### I. Welcome & Introductions

**Sandi Bisceglia, Chair**

- A. S. Bisceglia called the meeting to order and welcomed everyone.
- B. Quorum was established.

### II. Approval of Minutes

**Sandi Bisceglia, Chair**

Approval of January 19 Meeting Minutes

- o Motion to approve by M. Russell
- o Motion seconded by A. Jacobo
- o Motion unanimously passed

### III. Chair Updates

**Sandi Bisceglia, Chair**

S.

Bisceglia announced that current legislative platform updates have been shared with the local chambers and we are seeking their support. She reminded everyone that you can go online to watch any legislative session live.

Summit update: The Chair said she is thrilled and impressed with all the work the group has done and how well organized they are as the umbrella group.

The Futures Project (Children's Movement) is building a coalition grounded in the voices of parents and educators and is creating an action road map to distribute. Currently they are

Mission: To promote high-quality school readiness, voluntary pre-kindergarten and after school programs, thus increasing all children's chances of achieving future educational success and becoming productive members of society. The Coalition seeks to further the physical, social, emotional and intellectual needs of Miami-Dade and Monroe County children with a priority toward the ages before birth through age 5.



conducting a tour across the states to gather input and incite from parents', educators, directors and early childhood advocates.

- Phase I April 2022 to October 2022 and was all about early learning
- Phase II Oct 2022 to Feb 2023 and will focus on drafting the roadmap.

She also shared a recap on the Future's Project Summit in Orlando spearheaded by the Children's Movement. It was well attended by participants from all over the state of Florida including P. Hollingsworth from the Early Learning Coalition. Participants had their resumes posted on the walls in order to get to know each other. They were then divided into 5 sub committees to work for the next year to year and a half to establish a framework to advocate care for our earliest learners and create a 5-year strategic plan.

On December 2 several members of the Board of Directors and ELC staff visited Dolphin Montessori North in Key Largo. They met with the Director and got to see the teachers and children in action.

On January 20<sup>th</sup>, there is a visit planned at the University of Miami Linda Ray Intervention Center to learn more about the services they offer.

On May 17 at noon there will be a website live forum to discuss all the work done on behalf of the Early Learning Coalitions. It will be hosted by Madeline Thakur President & CEO of the Children's Movement.

S. Bisceglia also thanked the Early Learning Coalition for all their work to create a resolution that was presented to the Monroe County Board of County Commissioners requesting their support to raise the State Median Income (SMI) to allow more families to qualify for services.

Lastly, she added that some staff members of Senator Marco Rubio will be at the Murray Nelson center in Key Largo on March 15 from 11- 2 pm, if anyone would like to attend and ask questions or share concerns.

On April 5 Board members will be visiting the Aguamarina pre- school in Miami at 10:30 am.

#### **IV. Legislative Priorities**

V. Caballero reported that currently we are in week 2 of the legislative session. Key committees are tracking and monitoring 26 bills with the priority being 8 bills that focus on children ages birth to five.

One bill they are taking a close look at is House Bill 0447 that addresses child care facilities exempt from licensing.

He shared a copy of the resolution with the Monroe Board of County Commissioners that S. Bisceglia talked about earlier. Copies have been shared with all parties listed within the proposal. He thanked Mayor David Rice and Sandi Bisceglia for their help in getting this resolution unanimously passed and to raise awareness of the high cost of child care.



## V. Partner Updates

- A. District Head Start/Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) Update M. Russell, Early Childhood Supervisor reported that the numbers for MCSD are still pretty much the same as they were at the last meeting. April 1 is open enrollment although they do accept enrollments all year.

Summer VPK will be held at Gerald Adams Elementary School.

The Head Start program just went through a federal review and had a clean report with no deficiencies.

The Kindergarten Boost program may be available for Summer. The details are currently being discussed and worked out.

- B. S. Bennett (Provider Rep) shared that many schools are still having a hard time recruiting and retaining teachers and that no one is applying.

She stated that providers are thrilled with all the grants and appreciate them all but are having a hard time applying because it is confusing. Plus, she said teachers and Directors are stretched very thin and pulled in many directions and are finding it difficult to find the time to work on the grants. She is always encouraging other providers to apply and is grateful that there may be some in person training on grants coming up soon.

Teachers are appreciative of all the offerings by the Professional Development Department and they take full advantage of opportunities as they are able to.

There was an in-person Directors meeting (the first one since the pandemic) on Feb 11 at Kreative Kids. She thanked Maria Vaillant for hosting the get together.

Seven people attended because it is hard to get together on a Saturday but they got to talk about grants, staff, trainings, contracts etc. The next one will be at St. James on May 6 and after that they would like to have one in Key West. S. Bennett said she hopes more people can attend because it is important to network and spend time with each other. J. Hurst was invited to attend the May 6 meeting if he would like to.

The school sent their hands up to Tallahassee for Children's Week to be hung in the rotunda. E. Torres stated that some ELC staff will be up there and he will ask them to take pictures to share with everyone.

S. Bennett shared that she is working with J. Hurst and L. Dunn to schedule some in person or zoom DCF trainings for staff in the Keys.



- C. J. Hurst (DCF) mentioned that DCF is working together with the ELC for the families and children in the Keys. He recognizes that there is a big issue with getting and retaining staff even though some places are paying \$30 an hour. He stated that this is a very challenging time and everyone needs to stay in communication with each other. He stated that we were invited by E. Torres and A. Parrino to show other ELC's how to do a change in ownership.

Last month the Office of Licensing held its first in person provider meeting and he is hoping to do another one in Monroe next month. He is currently looking for creative ways to hold meetings and trainings in Monroe.

The DCF website has changed and is not easy to navigate. People are encouraged to reach out to him if they need guidance.

## **VI. Monroe County Updates**

**Laurie Dunn**

- A. Enrollment data --S. Gonzalez showed enrollment data for Monroe County in February.  
SR—278 children (this time last year was 298)  
VPK--- 463 children (this time last year it was 440)  
At Risk Referrals -46 children (increased from 31 last year)
- B. Needs Assessment Action Plan/Next Steps -- L. Dunn discussed how one of the findings of the community needs assessment that impacted employment and retention of teachers, was the availability of child care training and professional development.

In response to that our Professional Development department has increased their training opportunities. There are now Training offered online at various hours (day, evening and weekend) in English and in Spanish).

The next competency exam will be on March 25 and is already full. There will be another one on April 22 and the capacity has gone from 20 to 25. Registration will be open for an hour and a half just for Monroe staff (sometime in early April). The test site is at Marathon Lutheran school. S. Bisceglia stated that the College of the Florida Keys is open to hold the exams. L. Dunn will reach out to see who she can talk to and see how this can work.

The teacher ad helped recruit teachers at 3 sites. It will be updated and run again as soon as possible.

- C. Outreach Activities- L. Dunn stated that ELC staff will participate in the Community Resources Day on March 15<sup>th</sup> at the Key Largo library. They will be taking informational flyers to distribute. Promotional efforts take place continuously throughout the year. The bus shelter ads will run for another 8 weeks throughout the Keys.



**VII. American Rescue Plan Act**

A. Round 1 and Round 2 Grants. **Paloma Lopez-Barcena**

P. Lopez-Barcena said that Round 1 and Round 2 have closed and they are now reviewing and processing the additional grants. So far they have approved 36 of the 45 applications from Monroe County. They are hoping more applications come through from Monroe once they are able to hold the in-person training sessions.

B. ARPA-Build a World Class Workforce **Victor Caballero**

V. Caballero stated there are 580 applicants so far with 13 of those being from Monroe. Providers are not realizing that these grants are separate from Round 1 and Round 2. He is working with L. Dunn on a schedule to provide the in-person sessions in the Keys during the last week of March

**VIII. Professional development Institute Update**

**Ana Sejeck**

Super CLASS® Saturday is on the road (in person) April 29 from 8:30-12:30 at Miami Edison High School. There will be panel speakers, presenters', vendors and music.

**IX. Monroe Inclusion and Assessment Updates**

**Anabel Espinosa**

A. Developmental Screenings --A. Espinosa stated in February there were 11 ASQ's completed and 8 social & emotional (SE) ASQ's completed. Year to date the total are 189 ASQ's and 79 SE. Of those children there were 13 identified as needing some extra help. She believes that more specialized care is beneficial and she is pleased with the support offered in Monroe.

B. VPK SIS -Currently there are 4 children taking advantage of the services in Monroe.

**X. New Business**

**Sandi Bisceglia, Chair**

S. Bisceglia explained that the by laws require at least 3 meetings a year while we are currently doing 5. She suggested we go to 4 meetings a year since there are so many other opportunities for people to meet now. Everyone agreed and the calendar will be adjusted and updated.

**XI. Public Comments**

**Sandi Bisceglia, Chair**

None

**XII. Adjourn**

**Sandi Bisceglia, Chair**

- Motion to adjourn by M. Russell
- Motion seconded by S. Bennett

**Next Meeting Date: May 24<sup>th</sup> at 1 pm.**