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Agenda Item No. 3
March 4, 2009 Meeting

DATE: February 20, 2009

CLERK OF THE BOARD
ORANGE COUNTY
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

TO: Children and Families Commission of Orange County

FROM: Michael M. Ruane, Executive Director

SUBJECT: Implementation of Bridgespan Strategic Assessment - Progress Report

SUMMARY:

The Children and Families Commission of Orange County has received regular status reports on the status of the Bridgespan Implementation Plan, consistent with the recommendations outlined in the approved Strategic Assessment. This month's update focuses on the ongoing work related to two of the implementation tasks: conduct program reviews and assessments and align programs consistent with Bridgespan recommendations; and develop strategies to expand early literacy opportunities. This status report provides an update on work related to these efforts. No formal action is required at this time. Formal recommendations will be developed based on direction provided by the Commissioners and presented in April 2009.

Tracks 1 and 2: Program Assessments and Optimization

The methodology recommended by The Bridgespan Group supports long-term funding decisions to validate and affirm that the Commission investments are consistent with the long-term direction as articulated in the Bridgespan recommendations, and provides the capacity for the Commission to fund critical early learning priorities specifically in the target communities.

The first priority for the analysis was programs and other grants that received a one-year extension in March 2008 or July 2008, with contracts expiring June 30, 2009. These services represent the Commission's portfolio of program grants with community based agencies for specific services to families. The initial analysis of these programs was recently completed and formal recommendations will be presented for Commission consideration feedback in April 2009.

Recommendations to maintain program funding, renew funding contingent on identified changes in services scope or delivery approach, or discontinue funding are being developed. The recommendations will be based on sustaining investments in core services that the Commission has identified as long-term priorities. While some changes may be proposed in service delivery, Commission would maintain its commitment to these priorities. For those programs that will not be recommended for continued funding, options will be presented to effectively transition the children and families served to other service providers. Consistent with prior Commission direction, transition plans will be developed that minimize the impact of the change in funding.

Track 3: Early Literacy Program Expansion

An analysis of 12 potential early literacy programs using criteria established by The Bridgespan Group was completed and presented to the Commission in December 2008. A summary of the 12 programs is attached, and includes cost and an assessment of each program. Six early literacy programs were selected for further analysis and four were also reviewed with focus groups and interviews with early literacy staff and educators involved with program implementation and operation. The HABLA (Home-Based Activities Building Language Acquisition) has been through an extensive, separate review process and HIPPY (Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters) is not currently utilized in Orange County, so local focus group input was not applicable.

The qualitative data analysis included: the ease of implementation, training, and role of national or regional support; the ease of program operations, instructor support, operational challenges and suggested program modifications or enhancements; parent engagement, satisfaction and perception of program effectiveness; and the frequency and quality of parent/child interactions and improvement in children's early literacy skills and school readiness.

Based on a review of the interviews and feedback from focus groups, four early literacy programs are recommended for further consideration for expansion in Orange County. A workshop will be scheduled for April 2009 for the Commissioners to receive presentations on the following programs:

1. **The Latino Family Literacy Project** – This program is a well-designed, flexible and engaging program that offers ongoing technical support from a national organization. The program effectively engages parents to read with children in a curriculum that is easy to implement and moderate in cost.
2. **Raising A Reader** – This is a national book lending program that offers quality books for children to borrow while encouraging “book cuddling” between parents and children. Quality technical assistance from the Commission's Early Literacy Program ensures this program will continue to be enhanced over time. The program costs are moderate; however, it is recommended that some books be provided to families to keep in the home.

It is recommended that both of the above programs be implemented concurrently at sites to maximize outcomes of the two programs.

3. **HABLA** - This program is a quality locally designed program that provides long-term home-based visits by professionals to improve language and literacy experiences in the home. While this is a relatively expensive program, it provides an intensive and thorough interaction with parents and children and provides educational materials for the home.
4. **HIPPY** – This is a proven, evidence-based program that offers a 30-week home-based curriculum provided by trained staff to empower parents as their child's first teachers. The national office provides ongoing program development and technical assistance. The program costs are higher compared to school-based programs.

FOLLOW-UP WORK BY THE BRIDGESPAN GROUP

The project team from The Bridgespan Group has monitored the progress of implementation of the strategic assessment, and has also provided technical expertise and consultation on the assessment and organizational recommendations resulting from their prior work.

The Bridgespan Group has also developed a “cohort” model for their non-profit strategic assessment work, where a group of 8-10 organizations undergo a strategic assessment together. By utilizing a combination of limited on-site time and having the organizations draft their own business plan, they are able to conduct a cohort strategic assessment project for \$250,000 to \$300,000, which is less than an intensive strategic assessment for an individual organization. This option may be particularly useful in implementing funding strategies from the review of current programs. For example, a cohort of family resource centers and possibly some major Boys and Girls Clubs that will be facing funding challenges in the future may be candidates for this process as part of a funding action. VISTA members or graduate students could be assigned to each organization to draft the actual business plan, and The Bridgespan Group would provide the training for these staff. We will return at the April meeting with a specific proposal in conjunction with funding recommendations for existing programs.

PRIOR COMMISSION ACTIONS:

1. December, November, October 2008 – Received Bridgespan Implementation Update
2. September 2008 – Approved Annual Planning Session and Follow-Up Report
3. June 2008 – Received Bridgespan Group Portfolio Assessment

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS:

1. Receive Bridgespan Implementation Progress report and provide direction to staff.
2. Continue with Early Literacy Expansion Planning consistent with staff recommendations.

ATTACHMENT

1. Early Literacy Program Assessment Summary
2. Early Literacy Program Summary

Contact: Christina Altmayer

Children and Families Commission of Orange County
Early Literacy Program Assessment Summary

November 2008 – (Updated February 24, 2009-Shaded programs recommended for further consideration)

Program	Currently Implemented in Orange County	Aligned with CA Preschool Expectations	Includes "Best Practices"/ Developmentally-Appropriate Practices	Easily Replicable with Available Resources	Evidence-Based Program	Culturally-Competent	Realistic Time Investment for Families	Program Flexibility	Includes Home-Based Strategies
\$\$	YES	✓	✓	✓	⊙	✓	✓	✓	✓
\$\$\$	YES	✓	✓	NA	⊙	✓	⊙	NA	✓
\$	YES	⊙	✓	✓	☒	✓	✓	✓	✓
\$\$	YES	✓	✓	⊙	⊙	✓	⊙	⊙	✓
\$	NA	✓	✓	⊙	✓	✓	☒	⊙	☒
\$	YES	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
NA	YES	✓	✓	NA	NA	NA	⊙	NA	✓
NA	No	✓	✓	NA	✓	✓	⊙	NA	✓
\$	No	✓	✓	⊙	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
\$\$\$	No	✓	✓	⊙	✓	✓	⊙	⊙	✓
\$	No	✓	✓	✓	NA	NA	✓	✓	✓
\$	NA	✓	✓	NA	✓	NA	✓	⊙	✓

☒= Does Not Meet Criteria
\$\$\$ - Above \$500 per child/family

⊙ = Partially Meets Criteria
\$\$ - \$200-\$500 per child/family

d/family
nown/to be determined



Early Literacy Assessment Program Summary

1. **Everyday Literacy for Families (ELF)** - Informs and engages parents in supporting literacy learning for young children, using everyday, authentic literacy strategies.
2. **Home-Based Activities Building Language Acquisition (HABLA)** -Designed to increase the school readiness of disadvantaged Latino children by improving their language and literacy experiences in the home.
3. **Home-Based Early Literacy Parent Events (HABLA)** - Provides parent-hosted events that offer educator-led school readiness skill development strategies for the home to foster confidence in parents in their role as the first teacher of their children.
4. **Latino Family Literacy** - Provides training for teachers who work with Latino parents and their children in building a regular family reading routine and developing strong English-Language skills.
5. **Parent Institute for Quality Education (PIQE)** - Improves children’s school readiness by increasing parental engagement and knowledge of the education system.
6. **Raising A Reader** - Designed to foster healthy brain development, parent-child bonding and early literacy skills critical for school success by engaging parents in a routine of daily “book cuddling” with their young children.
7. **Parents and Children Together (PaCT)** - Provides training and support to parents to help them serve as teachers in the family, identify how their child learns best, and to provide parent interaction with their children in a classroom with teacher support.
8. **AVANCE Family Support and Education Program** - Provides parent education and support programs, including early literacy, to strengthen families.
9. **Project FLAME (Family Literacy, Aprendiendo, Mejorando, Educando)** -School-based program for limited English proficient families designed to enhance the home literacy environment and improve parent-school relationships.
10. **Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters (HIPPY)** – Empowers parents as their children’s first teachers by giving them the tools, skills and support to work with their children at home.
11. **Virtual Pre-K** - A parent education model designed to strengthen home-school partnerships, engage parents, and encourage the use of technology in education.
12. **MotherRead** - Teaches literacy skills to adults and children using children’s books and adult poems/narratives as the basis for instructions.