



Early Learning Coalition of Lake County
Innovative Services for Lake County's Children

**Board Meeting Minutes
December 3, 2008**

These minutes summarize the key issues of the Board meeting of the Early Learning Coalition Lake County, Inc. An audio recording of this meeting is available upon request.

Mr. Pruitt called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. The following members were in attendance: Mr. Will Pruitt, Mr. B. E. Thompson, Ms. Nancy Allison, Mr. Hays Ginn, Ms. Peggy Campbell, Dr. Barbara Howard, Ms. Sherry Olszanski, Ms. Michele Rawls, Mr. Hugh Brockington, Ms. Linda Stewart, Ms. Porcha Green, Ms. Darnell Stewart, Ms. Jeanie Rowin, and Ms. Sandy Stura. **The following members were absent:** Ms. Cynthia Freeman, Ms. Cheryl Ridley, Ms. Stephanie Ellis, Mr. Jeff Biddle, and Ms. Marsha Carpenter. **The following staff was present:** Ms. Leshia Buchbinder and Ms. Patricia Pierce. **Guests present:** Mr. William Hartman, Ms. Marie Carlberg, Ms. Doreen Chatelier, Ms. Cindy Winkle, Ms. Betsy Harrington, and Ms. Kathryn Sutherin.

Mr. Pruitt asked Ms. Buchbinder if a quorum was present and it was determined that a quorum of voting members was present. Mr. Pruitt presented Action Items 344-346 for discussion. Ms. Buchbinder pulled item 345 for discussion. An Audit Report was submitted by Greenlee, Kurras, Rice and Brown for inclusion into the Board packet. Mr. David Donofrio of Greenlee, Kurras, Rice & Brown went over some key issues in the report relating to administrative costs and how those were recorded in the BBA account code. Ms. Buchbinder commented that since the Coalition has subcontractors who also use the BBA code for tracking administrative costs, it is important that those numbers be combined for all programs to show overall administrative costs. Ms. Buchbinder commented that there are a lot of intricacies and that she will be working closely with Mr. Donofrio during the next few months. Ms. Buchbinder also commented on the process of wire transfers. The Coalition does wire transfers only to specific accounts on a regular basis. It was determined that SunTrust Bank is not consistently following through with confirmation of those transactions. It was recommended that the process be revised to include that the bank will submit written confirmation via US Mail to the Coalition of all wire transfers. Ms. Buchbinder stated that the Audit Review Committee, consisting of Coalition staff, Ms. Rowin and Ms. Campbell, met to review the Audit Report and that Mr. Donofrio was able to answer their questions. Ms. Buchbinder stated that the Committee did approve the audit at this level. Mr. Pruitt asked if there were any other questions or comments regarding Action Items 344-346. There were none. Ms. Rowin moved to approve Action items 344-346, seconded by Mr. Ginn. Motion carried.

Mr. Pruitt asked Ms. Buchbinder to proceed with the Executive Director's Report. Ms. Buchbinder provided an update on the process for safeguarding the Coalitions' state funds commenting that Ms. Jeanie Rowin and she had met with a representative of the First National Bank of Mt. Dora. They have submitted a proposal for the Coalition that is currently being reviewed. Ms. Buchbinder said that she is expecting proposals from two other local banks. Ms. Buchbinder also commented that the documents to secure the Coalition's state funds in a sweep account at Sun Trust Bank, have been completed and processed as instructed by the Board at the November Board meeting.

Ms. Buchbinder continued with the ELC update. Ms. Buchbinder reported that Ms. Peggy Campbell had contacted her to discuss some issues and concerns regarding the Lake County School Board and recent developments relating to their VPK and Pre-K programs. Ms. Campbell commented to Ms. Buchbinder that the committee that had been established to discuss the 2007-2008 VPK program deficit, particularly the wrap around program (referred to as Pre-K) where parents are responsible to pay for services, the policies and procedures for the program and the goals for the 2009-2010 VPK program had met again in November and discussed the option of a semester program for the 09-10 program year. Ms. Buchbinder briefly brought the board current on a meeting that had taken place in November at the Coalition and about a subsequent letter that had been drafted by a Lake County VPK provider about the issue.

Ms. Buchbinder asked Ms. Campbell to provide the Board with an update on the Committee, and offered other board members and/or public the opportunity the request to address the issue as well.

Ms. Campbell stated that the School Board Committee had been meeting since June and have been working hard to review the program now and for the future. The Committee is looking at several options to find a solution that will make the program viable for the school system. The School Board is considering the feasibility and cost of possibly changing the VPK program to a half-day (3 hours per day) for the school year and/or running the program for 6 hours a day per semester (spring and/or fall). Ms. Campbell said that the School Board expects that the number of children served for VPK will remain close to the same as previous years. Ms. Campbell commented that the School Board has a copy of a letter that was drafted by Ms. Sutherin (Owner Collina Kids Academy, Clermont) and thought that the numbers stated in the letter were not truly accurate. Ms. Campbell further commented that Ms. Sutherin had done significant online research regarding Lake and Orange County VPK programs. Ms. Campbell stated that Ms. Sutherin's letter expressed some concerns that she had regarding the VPK program. One of those concerns was the challenge of what to do with the children once they have completed the semester program or are waiting for a slot for the second semester. Ms. Campbell stated she wanted to bring this information to the Coalition's attention to keep everyone informed and to discuss the issues and do some collaborative brainstorming. Ms. Campbell commented that the VPK Committee would make a recommendation to the Lake County School Board for review. Ms. Campbell stated that the School Board will be meeting again in December and that a decision will need to be made before VPK roundups take place in the spring of 2009.

Ms. Campbell reported that she had met with Ms. Michele Rawls, Faith-Based representative to the Board and Ms. Nancy Allison, representative for the private providers to inform them about the potential changes. After the meeting, Ms. Rawls and Ms. Allison stated that they would have additional discussions with their perspective providers to share the information with the providers. Ms. Allison shared her concerns that this possible change may not work, and that many centers that she had spoken to had stated that they will not accommodate the change. Ms. Allison shared her concern that the quality of the program could be affected and she feels that private providers do as good a job and in some cases better than the School Board. Ms. Olszanski expressed issues regarding the possibility of available funds for parents who may utilize the semester program and then need subsidized care for the additional part of the year. Ms. Rawls expressed doubts about the school system not being able to meet the 6 hours of instructional time necessary for a semester program and the lack of transportation for many centers for before and after school care. Ms. Rawls mentioned a concern that many parents still think that the School Board runs the VPK program and that the private centers report to the School Board and not the Coalition. Ms. Rawls was also concerned that quality of the program will definitely suffer as children do not perform well in the afternoon at this age.

Mr. Pruitt reminded members that in the beginning there was a division between private providers and the school system and the Coalition suffered for years as they worked hard to bring all parties together. Mr. Pruitt said that this conversation, with all due respect to everyone, must stay on a positive path to serve the children.

Mr. Brockington expressed his fear that if the VPK program goes to shorter days, that there will be a lot of children running the streets or on their own with no parental guidance or structure for the remainder of the day. Mr. Brockington said that funds need to be found to serve the children.

Mr. Thompson added that parents need to be educated that if a half-day or semester program goes into effect they must understand that arrangements for care for the remainder of the day and/or year must be made and subsidized funds may not be available. Mr. Thompson commented that the even though the Coalition will not be able to mandate what the School Board does, a committee comprised of representatives from the school system, parents and providers to discuss a reasonable solution for all parties may provide to be beneficial. Dr. Howard commented that the school system and the providers must work together to provide the best services for the children.

Ms. Buchbinder added that Ms. Campbell had spoken with Ms. Allison and Ms. Rawls, as liaisons and not on a Committee, to share information and to do fact finding and the meeting at the Coalition was to do some collaborative

brainstorming. Ms. Buchbinder agreed with Mr. Thompson that a committee may be a good way to proceed. Mr. Pruitt asked if there is enough time to have another committee meeting if the School Board will meet later in December. Ms. Campbell commented that there may not be time to have another committee meeting, however, School Board meetings are public and anyone can sign a card if they want to address the committee.

Ms. Buchbinder addressed the kindergarten readiness rates that are published yearly indicating that information regarding the quality of VPK providers is available. Ms. Buchbinder stated the readiness rates do not distinguish 3 hours vs. 6 hours a day, or if the child was in a wrap around program, or if there were ESE children in the classroom. Ms. Buchbinder said that there are some current challenges with the calculation of readiness rates and that the rates alone should not be the determining factor as to whether or not private centers or school board programs provide the best VPK programs.

Ms. Campbell commented that she agrees with Dr. Howard. Ms. Campbell said that the private and public schools must do their very best to serve the children, and find ways to accomplish that goal. In a few more months, parents will be coming to VPK round ups and they will decide where they want their children to go. They do look at the readiness rates as they are listed in the provider booklets. Ms. Ridley commented that since the parents make the choice, it seems that private providers would benefit more than the schools. Ms. Rawls stated that it was her impression that the school system was asking private centers to collaborate for wrap around care and that the private centers would provide the transportation for the children.

Mr. Pruitt asked Ms. Sutherin to speak. Ms. Sutherin commented that upon hearing of the possible decision to go to a semester program that she did extensive research, however, the only readiness rates available online were for the 2006-2007 program year which indicated that private centers on average scored higher than the school system. Ms. Sutherin expressed her concerns about the impact to the private providers throughout Lake County, particularly in the south Lake area. Ms. Sutherin reviewed some of the data from 23 counties that she had submitted in her letter, stating that only Orange County is doing a semester program. Some counties are doing summer only or focusing on Title 1 children only. Ms. Sutherin commented that she cannot find any data stating that doubling the number of hours is going to enhance or double the quality. Ms. Allison commented that school readiness rates are not the only way to measure quality care. Although she agrees in part with Ms. Sutherin's comments, the School Board is also a private provider and they have freedom to do what it takes to make their program viable just like private centers. Ms. Allison asks that the Coalition be actively involved in the transition and share information with providers so the parents can be educated about the changes as they happen. Ms. Campbell reiterated that in her opinion, the school system's committee will recommend that the Board get out of the Pre-K (wrap around services) program, but keep the VPK Program and asked that everyone come together to make the program viable for everyone.

Mr. Pruitt asked Ms. Buchbinder to continue with the Executive Director's Report. Ms. Buchbinder thanked the Chair for allowing such a lengthy discussion regarding VPK as it is an important issue for everyone. Ms. Buchbinder said that she will entertain a VPK committee if the Board chooses to do so.

Ms. Buchbinder commented on a situation with a family child care provider who has been receiving funds as an SR Provider though they have only served one other child other than their own children. Ms. Buchbinder stated that it was brought to CCCS's attention when the parent was up for redetermination and documentation showed that for 6 months the parent was paid as a provider for serving one SR child and her own two children. Ms. Buchbinder stated that she contacted the state for clarification to see if there were any state policies prohibiting such payments. Ms. Buchbinder stated that she was told that there is not a state policy against a legally operating provider being paid to care for their own children if they have qualified as a SR parent. Ms. Buchbinder further commented that when this was addressed with the parent as a potential issue, the parent did not return to CCCS for redetermination. Due to this situation, Ms. Buchbinder said a policy is being written prevent this from happening in the future.

Ms. Buchbinder continued with the Executive Director's report mentioning that the readiness rate timeline was included in the packet and stated that out of 75 providers only 34 had gone online to verify their data; 16 had no

changes and 18 had minor changes relating to names or birthdates, etc. Ms. Rawls commented that she had not received notification from DOE about the verification process. Ms. Buchbinder commented that the Coalition, in addition to DOE, sent out reminders to providers about the deadline for verification of data. Ms. Buchbinder said she will try to get a mailing list from DOE to see who was notified.

Ms. Buchbinder reviewed the QIC training calendar and talked about some of the trainings and meetings for providers over the next few weeks. Also included is the CCCS training calendar. Ms. Buchbinder stated that CCCS is having an Emotional Baggage training this evening and providers can contact Ms. Hoban to see if there is still room for attending the meeting.

Ms. Buchbinder stated that she and Mr. Pruitt will be attending the ELAC meetings in Tampa. Referencing the OEL/AWI correspondence, Ms. Buchbinder commented that amendments to the Plan were submitted to the State that included the latest approved revisions to the By Laws and the updated Board Membership document. Also included was a letter from AWI with results of the SR/VPK eligibility review. A response is due by December 21, 2008 regarding the corrective action for each finding as well as identifying action taken to develop best business practices as noted in the report addendum. Ms. Buchbinder said that the majority of the findings have already been corrected, but were still reported as a finding. Some findings related to wrong VPK forms being completed, missing parent signatures, missing income verification documents, etc.

Ms. Buchbinder moved to Action Item 349, the Financial Report. Due to time constraints, Ms. Buchbinder asked members to take the time to review the enclosed documents and to contact her if they had any questions or concerns.

Mr. Pruitt moved to Action Items 350-353, Committee Reports. Mr. Ginn reported that the Professional Development Committee had met prior to Thanksgiving to pre-qualify the applications received for the Fall Semester reimbursements. Some of the applications reviewed needed additional information and since the Committee met so late in the year additional time was granted to allow the documents to be submitted before the next meeting of the Committee.

Ms. Buchbinder reported that the Screening and Assessment met after the November Board meeting to discuss the current status of the pre and post assessment tool. Ms. Buchbinder further commented that now that the Coalition has a full year of assessments it was determined that there still remains a few challenges with the CCCS developed tool. One of those challenges is that many of the providers don't understand how to complete the tool. Ms. Buchbinder posed the question to Michele Reid that if the Coalition is going to take an in-depth look at the assessment tool and possibly make changes would we have to submit an amendment to the Coalition Plan identifying the actual tool to be used, or could the tool selection remain open. Ms. Reid stated that she would check with the state for clarification. Ms. Buchbinder commented that the Coalition has changed the tool several times over the years and providers are still having difficulty administering the tool in a way that will yield valid results.

Ms. Buchbinder commented that the Curriculum Advisory Council has not met, though when scheduled the committee will be working on the rubric for determining developmentally appropriate curriculum. Ms. Buchbinder also reminded the board that the members serve as an advisory group and is not an official committee.

Mr. Biddle was not present to report on the Provider Growth and Development Committee. Mr. Ginn commented that to his knowledge the committee has not met recently. Ms. Buchbinder reported that Mr. and Mrs. Biddle and their church, as an outreach effort, adopted the Masters Kids Academy in Groveland. The intent was to renovate the church which included the child care center as well. The Coalition was asked to be involved to help identify what was needed to bring the center in compliance with the requirements of the Environmental Rating Scales which is an assessment performed on all SR facilities. The interior of the facility was painted, furniture was provided and other improvements were done to meet their needs. Ms. Buchbinder stated that Mr. Biddle truly felt that these are the type of things that the Provider Growth and Development Committee should be doing to help the providers.

Ms. Buchbinder said that the Programmatic Reports are included in the packet and pointed out a couple of colored charts for review by the Board and suggested that she is available for questions.

There was no Old or New Business for discussion.

Mr. Pruitt wished everyone a Merry Christmas and thanked the members stating that it is an honor working with them. Ms. Buchbinder thanked the Board members for all that they do on behalf of the Coalition and the children.

Ms. Winkle asked if Coalition staff will be attending the Lake School Board meeting. Ms. Buchbinder commented that Simone and she will attend the meeting as a liaison. Ms. Campbell commented that the meeting in December will be a committee meeting not a board meeting. Ms. Allison said that due to this situation she has been talking to more providers than ever before and that she is willing to get information out to the providers if they will provide email addresses.

Ms. Rowin thanked Ms. Campbell for bringing the information to the Board and emphasized that we all need to work together. Ms. Olszanski said that all the information needs to be put together in a written format and given to the parents. Ms. Rowin said that we need Ms. Campbell to continue as our liaison on this matter as it moves forward at the School Board level.

There were no other items for discussion.

Mr. Thompson moved to adjourn, seconded by Ms. Rowin. Motion carried.

Meeting adjourned at 10:35 a.m.

Submitted by:
Patricia Pierce, Executive Assistant

Approved January 7, 2009