



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

Minutes Board meeting March 4, 2009

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, Chair, called the meeting to order 9:15 a.m.

The following members were in attendance: Mr. Will Pruitt, Mr. B. E. Thompson, Ms. Nancy Allison, Ms. Sandra Stura, Ms. Linda Stewart, Mr. Hays Ginn, Ms. Donna Gregory, Ms. Jeanie Rowin, Ms. Darnell Stewart, Ms. Peggy Campbell, Dr. Barbara Howard, Ms. Sherry Olszanski, Ms. Cheryl Ridley Ms. Porcha Green and Ms. Michele Rawls. **The following members were absent:** Dr. Hugh Brockington, Ms. Marsha Carpenter and Ms. Stephanie Ellis. **The following staff was present:** Ms. Leshia Buchbinder, Mr. Bill Hartman and Ms. Patricia Pierce. **Guests present:** Ms. Carol Hoban, Ms. Marie Carlberg, Ms. Cheryl Brown, Ms. Ginger Babb, Ms. Betsy Harrington, Ms. Nakia Myles, Ms. Kathy Roberts, Ms. Michele Reid, Ms. Cindy Winkle, Ms. Renet McCall and Ms. Alison Petrie

Mr. Pruitt presented Action Items 385 – 387 for questions or discussion. There were none. Ms. Rowin moved to approve Action Items 385-387, seconded by Mr. Thompson. Motion carried.

Mr. Pruitt asked Ms. Buchbinder to present the Executive Director's Report. Ms. Buchbinder made a few comments regarding the recommended changes to the SR 2008-09 Provider Agreement/Intent to Contract. Currently new providers, both already established as well as newly established, are required to have an environmental rating scale assessment performed and must pass with a 3.0 or higher in order to be awarded an SR contract. In order for the ERS to be completed successfully the provider must have children attending their program. Ms. Buchbinder commented that one of the challenges of assessing newly established facilities is when the facility is located in an area where parents cannot afford private provider fees. Since the Coalition is not able to complete an ERS evaluation without children in attendance and get a valid score the assessment requirement prior to the award of a contract is unattainable. Ms. Buchbinder read a letter that she received from Ms. Cheryl Brown, asking for assistance in getting approved for an SR contract expressing the challenge she has had finding private pay parents to attend her facility. Ms. Buchbinder commented that additional centers have approached the Coalition for a SR Contract, though those centers were able to secure private pay parents prior to the required ERS assessment.

Ms. Buchbinder stated that due to these issues, the Coalition developed an ERS pre-checklist that will gauge the quality of the provider for ITERS and ECERS now, as well as for family child care centers in the future. This pre-checklist will rate providers from 1 to 5 on materials, space, etc., but excludes the teacher-child interaction portion of the assessment. If a provider scores a 3 or better and achieves at least 85% on the health and safety checklist, they would be awarded an SR Provider Agreement on a probationary status. The Coalition's Educational Specialist would then have 90 days to offer technical assistance and work with providers. At the end of the 90 days, the Specialist would provide a formal ERS assessment with children in attendance to gauge the quality of their center. Ms. Buchbinder stated that if the provider does not meet the previously established 3.0 at the end of the 90 days, they would have to follow the steps already identified in the approved SR Provider Agreement.

Ms. Buchbinder stated that Ms. Brown already has the space, staff and some children in care and is ready to proceed with the probationary status to offer SR services. Ms. Brown thanked Ms. Buchbinder and Ms. Close for their assistance in this process. Ms. Buchbinder referred to the backup information that was included in the packet for this action item.

Ms. Buchbinder proceeded with the Executive Director's Report, stating that the CSC grant for the upcoming program year was submitted on February 23, 2009. The request was for \$25,000. Ms. Buchbinder commented that Children Services Council has commented that the 2009-2010 grant awards should focus on health issues, therefore the Coalition is looking to expand the Big Blue Bus program to include partners from Florida Kid Care, the Lake County Health Department, Lake County Dentistry Program/Tooth Mobile and prenatal services. Information will be available for parents and providers on the Big Blue Bus. One of

the new initiatives for the Big Blue Bus Program is a collaboration between Lake County Dentistry's Tooth Mobile and the Big Blue Bus. Both buses will attend community events in the fall and will partner to provide services to both parents and children.

Ms. Buchbinder asked Mr. Thompson if he knew when the grants would be awarded. Mr. Thompson commented that the initial reviews would be done in March, with budget review in July and August; he thought the final approval would be completed by October 2009.

Ms. Buchbinder moved on to discuss the readiness rates stating that the SR rates have been released for 07/08 which are available for review on line. Ms. Buchbinder reviewed the information on several pages explaining the results and how they are determined. Ms. Buchbinder commented based on the 07-08 rates Lake County had five low performing providers. Ms. Buchbinder explained that one provider has been a LPP for the past three years and if they continue to be an LPP for the 08-09 program year they run the risk of no longer being permitted to do the VPK program. Ms. Buchbinder commented on some of the factors that could cause a provider to have a low performing score; i.e. a child who is autistic or a child in which English is their second language. Ms. Buchbinder commented that in previous years, the Coalition held special LPP trainings, however, this year the state will not be granting any additional funds, so the LPP trainings will be incorporated into the regular VPK trainings.

Ms. Buchbinder proceeded with the Quality Initiative Campaign pointing out the trainings scheduled for March and April. The planning for the Uniting for Children Conference is well underway, with 48 attendees registered to date. Ms. Buchbinder commented that typically providers will wait until the last week to register so we are not too concerned about the numbers at this juncture. Ms. Buchbinder commented that if Board members would like to volunteer to help the day of the conference to please contact her. Also, Ms. Buchbinder reported that on Sunday, April 5, the Coalition will celebrate Parents and Kids Day from 1-4 at the Lake Sumter Community College Campus. Ms. Buchbinder commented that there will be local agencies participating and distributing information on their services. Ms. Buchbinder also commented that there will be clowns, face painting, games and a live performance from a local dance group. Ms. Buchbinder invited members to come and take part in this event.

Ms. Winkle asked if the Coalition would post trainings held by CCCS on our website. Ms. Buchbinder said that we could do that and asked Ms. Carol Hoban to do the same with ELCLC trainings on the CCCS website. Ms. Hoban said that they already held several trainings on behavioral issues. Ms. Hoban also reported that CCCS currently has 70 behavior case files open as well as 20 on the wait list. There is a big need with providers regarding behavioral issues and CCCS staff is addressing those needs as quickly as possible.

Ms. Buchbinder moved on with the Executive Director's report stating that she and Mr. Pruitt will be attending the AELC and ELAC meetings in Tallahassee on March 12-13th. Ms. Buchbinder commented that there are several Coalitions trying to meet with their local legislators that week. Ms. Buchbinder reported that she and Mr. Pruitt will be trying to meet with Senator Fasano and Governor Crist as well, to discuss the issues surrounding Early Learning Coalitions. Ms. Buchbinder reported that Senator Fasano has requested Ms. Brittney Birken to assemble a taskforce comprised of AWI/OEL representatives, Association of Early Learning Coalition Executive Committee, the Chair of the Early Learning Advisory Council and several Coalition Chairs who chair various ELAC committees. The purpose of the taskforce is to identify potential cost savings associated with consolidation and other administrative efficiencies relevant to the work of Early Learning Coalitions. This taskforce is to identify if there are any costs savings that could be identified related to the implementation of Florida's early learning programs and support services that will not compromise the quality or accessibility of services for children and families. Ms. Buchbinder said the taskforce met the week of February 23-27th. Ms. Buchbinder commented that some discussions related to efficiency and effectiveness of Early Learning Coalitions, options regarding reduction and/or mergers of ELCs throughout the state, and the possibility of creating an administrative hub for multiple counties were discussed. Ms. Buchbinder referenced a page in the board packet that shows various administrative costs for Coalitions throughout the state. Ms. Buchbinder reviewed the state's average expenses and commented that although Lake County is not the lowest ranking in administrative costs, we are well below the state's average for allowable expenditures. Ms. Buchbinder reported that the taskforce members reached a group consensus regarding the pros and cons and efficiency of the various options.

Ms. Buchbinder reported that Ms. Cynthia Lorenzo, former Deputy Director of AWI for the past two years has been named as AWI/OEL's Interim Director.

Ms. Buchbinder reported that the 2nd Quarter FY 2008-09 monitoring of the ELCLC/CCCS contracts is underway. Enclosed in the board packet for review is the letter from Ms. Patsy Grant that was sent to Ms. Olszanski stating the monitoring will cover the CCR&R portion of the ELC1 contract for December 2009. Also included in the packet is the ELCLC monitoring tool that will evaluate the nine ELC1 contract deliverables associated with the CCR&R part of the contract and a list of pre-on-site documentation that will be needed prior to the on-site visit.

Ms. Buchbinder proceeded to review the Fiscal Analysis for January 2009 and the Utilization Report that was included in the packet. Ms. Buchbinder commented that 58.9% of the program year is gone with 41.1% remaining. The dollars in utilization are being spent as to leave no funds on the table at the end of the year. Ms. Buchbinder commented on the provider rate increase which amounts to \$1 per child per day or \$5 a week for Infants and Toddlers. Ms. Buchbinder further commented that this is the first time a request has been made and part of the request is that the Coalition demonstrates how the increase will be maintained in future years. Ms. Buchbinder also commented on the possibility of a restoration of the \$120,000 reduction by the state made last year based on the 2009 economic stimulus dollars. Ms. Buchbinder commented that if additional dollars are received due to the economic stimulus package that Coalition will have to respond quickly. Ms. Buchbinder referenced the Fiscal Analysis included in the Board packet for review by members as well as the SIT reports included in the packet. Ms. Buchbinder commented that the BG8 category shows a higher number of both terminations and recertifications. Ms. Buchbinder also reminded the Board that there is an open waitlist at this time and that enrollments this year are the highest ever.

Mr. Pruitt called for Committee Reports. Mr. Ginn reported that the Professional Development Committee is scheduled to meet following the Board meeting to review the applications submitted for the spring semester. Applicants will receive a letter from the Coalition to let them know if their application is approved or denied. Ms. Buchbinder reported that there was no action on the other three committees.

Ms. Buchbinder continued with the Program Reports, stating that the Big Blue Bus Program is going well. The quarterly report indicates that we have exceeded the goal of serving 350 parents and children in the south Lake area for the Community Foundation of South Lake County. Ms. Buchbinder commented that the Coalition's Education Specialists will be collaborating with the Big Blue Bus Program to offer technical assistance at the same time the Bus is scheduled to visit which will result in having more children seen from Family Child Care Homes. Ms. Buchbinder stated that the monthly Quality Report and the VPK report is included in the packets for review.

Mr. Pruitt called for Old Business. Ms. Buchbinder provided an updates on securing Coalition dollars. Ms. Buchbinder reminded the Board that previously it was voted that the funds were to remain with SunTrust, though in a different type of account to ensure the safeguarding of Coalition dollars. Ms. Buchbinder commented that as per the Board's direction she and Ms. Rowin continue to research alternative banking solutions that may be more beneficial to the Coalition. Ms. Buchbinder reported that a meeting was held with First National Bank of Mt. Dora and additional meetings will be scheduled with United Southern Bank to consider both banks as a potential financial institution for the Coalition. Mr. Ginn mentioned that there is another bank in Eustis, First Green Bank, who primarily works with loans, etc for companies who are eco-friendly. Ms. Rowin said that she will contact the Bank and schedule a meeting. Ms. Buchbinder stated that she will be bringing a recommendation to the Board in April for consideration.

Mr. Pruitt called for New Business.

Ms. Buchbinder stated that the previous Bill, HB501 discussed at the February Board meeting that recommended abolishment of Early Learning Coalition, had been referred to several committees within the Legislature. Ms. Buchbinder referenced SB2570, written by Senator Wise that was included in the Board packet for review. Ms. Buchbinder commented that at this time a companion Bill has not been submitted, though there is discussion that Representative Evers will amend HB501 to accept the language of SB2570. Ms. Buchbinder proceeded to highlight several sections of the Bill for discussion. Ms. Buchbinder noted that throughout the Bill the phrase subsidized child care was stricken. Ms. Buchbinder moved on to discuss changes to the market rate section of the Bill which included a substantial rewording of the section. Ms. Buchbinder pointed out that this section references paying school readiness providers the prevailing market rate for child care services, also specifying that if adopted AWI shall establish procedures that must include a minimum rate by county as well as a maximum rate for Gold Seal providers.

Ms. Buchbinder referenced the section in the Bill which states AWI may adopt specific strategies that address school readiness programs, and that Coalitions shall amend its school readiness plan to conform to the strategies adopted by AWI. This portion also

states that AWI provide technical assistance to Coalitions based on information obtained from public input, government reports, monitoring visits, etc. to enhance the efficiency of the Coalitions. An additional change indicates that the requirement for School Readiness children to comply with DCF requirements ensuring that children meet all the health requirements such as immunizations, appropriate vision and hearing screenings, and examinations was amended to read within 30 days of enrollment instead of prior to enrollment.

Ms. Buchbinder referenced the section of the Bill that indicates a reduction of coalitions from 30 to 20 Coalitions which would result in mergers except for those Coalitions that serve an average of 3,000 School Readiness children per month. If approved the effected Coalitions must comply with the merging procedures and be organized by April 1, 2010. The Bill does state that AWI would be authorized to allow a Coalition to stand alone even if they do not meet the 3000 children if it can demonstrate that merging would cause an extreme hardship on the Coalition. Ms. Buchbinder stated that if Lake County was forced to merge with a larger Coalition that the ELC would run the risk of being taken over by the larger Coalition and in turn lose the local control and local support that the ELC has worked so hard to achieve. Ms. Buchbinder gave examples of how a merger could affect staffing including the reduction of staff or administrative changes.

Mr. Pruitt commented that he is going to meet with some senators and the Governor to work to revise the Bill language. Mr. Pruitt said if the stimulus dollars come down and we were in the process of having to merge with another Coalition that it would not be good for the Lake County Coalition. Mr. Thompson commented that for the past seven years, the Coalition has not had an increase and still managed to save dollars.

Further discussing the Bill Ms. Buchbinder referenced the section that would reduce the number of Coalition Board members to at least 10 members but not more than 18. The adoption will also establish the minimum and maximum number of members that may be appointed to a Coalition. This may also mean that we would lose 2 governor appointees, the mandated position with the Health Department, the mandated County Commissioner representative and the central agency representative. If the Bill was approved there would also be adjustments to voting and non-voting categories.

The Board members discussed options relating to starting a petition to circulate amongst the public, child care providers, parents, etc. stating what the local community would lose if this Bill were passed. Ms. Rawls and Ms. Allison offered to work on the petition process and get signatures. Dr. Howard commented that the petition or any letter needs to be more than just symbolic, that the message to the public must describe what services would be lost; how will the people see us and see the impact on our children. Dr. Howard added how do we get parents to speak out? Commissioner Stewart offered to process a resolution to the County Commissioners asking their support that that our legislators not support the Bill.

Ms. Buchbinder encouraged members to review the entire language of the Bill and to contact her if there are any questions.

There was no other business.

Mr. Thompson moved to adjourn, seconded by Mr. Ginn. Motion carried.
Meeting adjourned at 10:10 a.m.

Respectfully submitted by:

Patricia Pierce
Executive Assistant

Approved April 1, 2009