



Early Learning Coalition of Lake County  
Innovative services for Children of Lake County

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 9:05 a.m.

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

Ms. Lesha Buchbinder informed the members that Ms. Peggy Campbell who has served on the Coalition Board for several years representing the Lake County School Board will be retiring from the school system on April 30, 2009 and therefore, will be leaving the ELCLC Board. Ms. Buchbinder thanked Ms. Campbell for her dedication and continued support to the Coalition on behalf of the children in Lake County and presented her with an award from the Board and the Coalition. Ms. Campbell's expertise with early learning education as well as her guidance and friendship to the Coalition will truly be missed. Ms. Campbell said it has been a pleasure working the Coalition and the Board and acknowledged that we've come a long way in the past few years. Ms. Campbell thanked Ms. Buchbinder and the Board for the recognition.

Mr. Pruitt presented Action Items 398A through 399 for questions or discussion. Ms. Buchbinder requested a discussion on action item 399. Mr. Thompson moved to approve Action Items 398A-398B, seconded by Mr. Hayes. Motion carried.

Mr. Pruitt asked Ms. Rowin to provide an update on the banking recommendation. Ms. Rowin referred to the enclosed analysis prepared by Ms. Buchbinder referencing banking fees, interest rates, etc. on three banks. Ms. Rowin commented that after many discussions and meetings with various bank representatives, she, supported by Ms. Buchbinder, is recommending moving ELCLC funds from SunTrust to First National Bank of Mt. Dora. Ms. Rowin commented that several factors were taken into consideration such as the security of funds, potential bank fees and the level of customer service. Ms. Buchbinder stated that the Coalition has done business with SunTrust Bank for many years; however, within the last 6 months there has been an ongoing challenge with getting timely responses to calls and a lack of customer service. Ms. Rowin stated that when it was made known to SunTrust that the Coalition was considering changing banking service providers, the local branch contacted staff to see how they could be of assistance. Ms. Stura asked Ms. Rowin, who has extensive banking experience within the community, for her opinion regarding the stability with the banks presented. Ms. Rowin commented that USB has experienced some loan losses and SunTrust is having financial difficulties. First National of Mt. Dora, which is locally owned, has a large trust department, is more stable and is a very good bank. After further discussion regarding action item 399, Ms. Rowin asked for a motion to move forward with the transferring of Coalition funds to First National Bank of Mt. Dora. Ms. Stura moved to accept the recommendation to move the Coalition funds from SunTrust Bank to the First National Bank of Mt. Dora, seconded by Mr. Ginn. Motion carried.

Mr. Pruitt asked Ms. Buchbinder to present the Executive Director's Report. Ms. Buchbinder began referencing a copy of a letter sent to members of the Florida Senate Commerce Committee from Mr. Pruitt and Mr. Thompson

regarding the Early Learning Bill, SB2570. As discussed at previous board meetings, this bill would significantly reduce or eliminate local involvement in early learning services and statewide changes that could negatively impact economic recovery throughout Florida. The letter reminds the committee members of the local impact that consolidation would have on small and rural communities as well as the impact of the state wide delivery of the federal stimulus dollars. Ms. Buchbinder said she spoke with Ms. Michele Rawls who then followed up with a personal contact within Senator Crist's office.

Ms. Buchbinder provided the legislative updates, stating that Ms. Birken of AWI and Senator Wise met to discuss possible amendments to SB2570. One amendment for consideration is the postponement of the consolidation stating this is not a good time because of the economy. The local control for Coalitions needs to remain strong. Another issue for consideration was revising the language as it relates to the prevalent market rates for providers. Ms. Buchbinder commented that currently there is no companion bill therefore it may not be on the agenda at this time. Mr. Pruitt commented on ways that legislators can get around bills that are not moving, by adding pieces to other economic bills that move forward quickly. Mr. Pruitt emphasized the need to continue to talk to legislators and Lake County representatives confirming our opposition to the current bills.

Ms. Buchbinder commented on a resolution sponsored by Commissioner Stewart which will be presented to the Lake County Commissioners at their April 7, 2009 meeting. The resolution asks the Commissioners to oppose SB2570 or any similar bill that would consolidate Early Learning Coalitions and urges the Florida Legislature not to pass such legislation. Ms. Buchbinder commented that relative information has been requested and sent to Ms. Rawls and Ms. Allison that will be shared with providers and parents.

Ms. Buchbinder informed the Board that a grant application in the amount of \$10,000 had been completed and submitted to the Community Foundation of South Lake County, Inc. on March 31, 2009. If approved, the funds will be used to support the Mobile Resource Unit program serving parents, children and child care providers in Lake County. A copy of the application is in the packets for review. Ms. Buchbinder also commented that we just received word from the Orlando Sentinel Family Fund that a grant request we submitted in the fall of 2008 is still being considered for this year.

Ms. Buchbinder referenced a letter she received from former Board member Jeff Biddle requesting computers. Mr. Biddle is associated with a nonprofit organization called New Beginnings, who is preparing to open a thrift shop, food pantry and job training center all on one property site in Minneola. The thrift shop will sell donated items to raise money for the mission of New Beginnings and fund a new shelter for women and children. The training center will be teaching clients computer skills, internet access and selling some items from the thrift store on E-Bay as part of their training. Mr. Biddle's letter is requesting any surplus computers from the Coalition.

Mr. Thompson commented that as President of the Mid Florida Homeless Coalition, who also works with New Beginnings, he is aware of at least one computer which has been donated to New Beginnings by the Homeless Coalition. Mr. Thompson stated that the Coalition needs to establish a protocol for these types of requests. Ms. Buchbinder commented that in the past we have given them to nonprofit providers or organizations based on state requirements in which recipients be religious exempt or 501© (3) eligible. Mr. Pruitt asked if these donations could be set up through the Early Learning Foundation and then processed out to recipients. Mr. Thompson commented that it could be done as an in-kind donation from the Foundation. Ms. Buchbinder stated that she will get legal guidance as well as contact Ms. Michele Reid for further information. Ms. Rowin moved that the Coalition be authorized to establish a protocol to give these computers to the Coalition's Foundation for distribution. Mr. Thompson seconded. Motion carried.

Ms. Buchbinder referenced the School Readiness Provider Contract for 2009-2010 that was in the Board packet. Ms. Buchbinder asked Board members to review the document prior to the May 6, 2009 Board meeting as it will be presented for approval by the Board. There are some key changes to the contract such as the separation for curriculum requirements for Infant and Toddlers and Pre K. Other changes include the addition of an alternate phone

number for providers as most have cell phones. Also, for those providers scoring less than the required 3.0 on ERS a requirement was added to the corrective action plan process which includes attending ERS training. Ms. Buchbinder commented that many times she is asked about holiday closures, specifically regarding the Christmas holiday. A poll will be done with providers to see how many would prefer the day before or the day after Christmas. The majority will rule and that day will be recorded as the official holiday.

Ms. Winkle commented on the provider contracts and asked that providers be given copies of any appendices that were attached. Ms. Buchbinder apologized if the appendices were overlooked last year as it was not the intent. Ms. Buchbinder stated that this year the providers will have copies of the entire contract for their files.

Ms. Buchbinder continued stating that due to her scheduled absence in June, other important action items in line for the May agenda will include the LifeStream Contract Renewal, SR/VPK grant agreement, and the ELCLC budget for next year,

Ms. Buchbinder reported that previously the Board authorized the Coalition to collaborate with Healthy Start to purchase parenting books and infant/toddler books not to exceed \$10,000. Ms. Buchbinder has received a draft proposal from Healthy Start indicating the purpose of the grant, services to be provided and the cost associated with the collaboration. Ms. Buchbinder stated that according to the proposal the cost of the curriculum is \$13 per age category and that a total of 600 will be purchased totaling \$7,800. Ms. Buchbinder added that it is the intent of the proposal to distribute the curriculum to the parents in May and June of this fiscal year. Ms. Buchbinder stated that she will continue to work with Healthy Start to define the deliverables to ensure that books are available and delivered as proposed.

Ms. Buchbinder continued with review of the VPK information. VPK summer roundups were held at the Coalition offices in March and a total of 37 vouchers were issued which is down from the 62 enrollments for summer of 2008. Ms. Buchbinder added that there will be a total of 10 locations offering the summer program for 2009; 5 private schools are new this year, 4 public and 1 charter school. A copy of the Summer Provider Booklet is included in the packets for review. Ms. Buchbinder commented that roundups for the fall of 2009 are scheduled throughout the county during the week of April 20-24, 2009. Ms. Buchbinder commented that an ad had been placed in Lake Style Magazine and there will be a radio advertisement on WLBE that will run for two weeks. Posters and flyers have also been created and distributed by Child Care Choice Services.

Ms. Buchbinder reviewed the readiness rate information for VPK that was included in the packets highlighting the comparisons from 2005 through 2008 for those who completed VPK, those who did not complete and the non-VPK children. The rates are based on ECHOS and DIBELS. Ms. Buchbinder also pointed out the statewide readiness rate information that which was included in the packet and stated that it broken down by 1<sup>st</sup> – 4<sup>th</sup> quartile.

Mr. Pruitt commented on the numbers that poverty levels are always indicated as the highest at risk and we attempt to increase those levels of readiness skills. Mr. Pruitt asked Ms. Green if she agreed that poverty is the highest at risk. Ms. Green agreed that reports do show that and at Head Start the family social service staff work with the parents to determine their needs and to assist with funding while teachers work with the children. Ms. Green said she does see improvement but it varies from program year to program year and Lake County is in constant flux. Mr. Pruitt commented that some legislators see some issues that are not being addressed now. Mr. Pruitt also asked if new parents seeking assistance from Head Start, should have to meet certain criteria up front to receive financial assistance? Mr. Pruitt said there is an "idea" floating around with some legislators in the state of Washington, that if a parent is on welfare and already has one or more children, should they be allowed to continue receiving funds if they decide to have more children or should their assistance be terminated? Mr. Pruitt further stated that the idea forces parents to be accountable. There were several comments made on this subject, but the overall agreement was that as far as the SR and VPK Programs are concerned, there is only a limited amount of requirements that are placed upon the parents.

Ms. Stura commented on the information in the packet relating to the English Language Learners program. Ms. Buchbinder referred to the letter from Shan Goff regarding the Department of Education/Office of Early Learning's release of the *English Language Learners in the VPK Classroom* learning module back in February 2008. Through a collaborative effort with DCF participants may now register, pay a \$10 fee, and complete the course on the website as well as the online assessment, will receive a Certificate of Completion or CEU from the Department of Children and Families. Ms. Buchbinder said that this information will be sent to SR and VPK providers to encourage them to do the training. Ms. Stura thought this was an excellent program and that it be considered in planning for next year's training opportunities. Ms. Stura also referred to a book by Ms. Ruby Payne called *A Framework to Understanding Poverty* suggesting that it also be considered for training in the future. Ms. Buchbinder agreed that this is a good opportunity for a training collaboration with the School System for next year.

Ms. Winkle stated that she is in favor of the English Learners Language course and is glad that providers are able to get this through the Coalition for non degreed education. Ms. Winkle asked if providers are held accountable through the SR provider contract, but the parents are getting the funds; why can't we go to legislators and ask them to give us the power to hold parents accountable.

Ms. Buchbinder moved on to the Coalition QIC update stating that there have been several good trainings held in March. Ms. Buchbinder specifically commented on the training for family child care homes scheduled on March 16. This training was attended by 30 family child care homes which is 68% of Lake County's child care home providers. Ms. Buchbinder commented on a letter received from Ms. Jada Harris praising the Enrichment training that was held at the Coalition. Ms. Buchbinder reviewed the other training information for April, including the Uniting for Children Conference on April 4, and the 1<sup>st</sup> Parent's and Children's Day event at Lake-Sumter on April 5, 2009. Ms. Buchbinder invited Board members to attend the April 5<sup>th</sup> event outdoors at the College.

At a previous Board meeting Ms. Buchbinder informed the Board about the AWI taskforce that was established by Senator Fasano regarding the consolidation of Coalitions. The Office of Early Learning/Agency for Workforce Innovation provided the official Early Learning Consolidation and Efficiency Findings Report from the Taskforce. This four-page document is in the packets for review by members and Ms. Buchbinder encouraged everyone to read the report and contact her if they have questions.

Ms. Buchbinder continued her report regarding the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter CCR&R contract monitoring. A letter to LifeStream stated that although most areas of the evaluation were found to be in or exceeding specified requirements of the contract there are three areas of concern that need to be addressed. Ms. Buchbinder commented that the Coalition conducted "secret shopper" calls to CCCS, and that callers were unable to reach a CCR&R staff member because the person who answered the calls assumed they needed financial assist and did not put the calls through to CCR&R staff. Also, a third call was made to the Spanish speaking staff member who was still difficult to reach and after continued calls a message was left of the eighth attempt. The letter states that the call was returned the same day, however our caller felt rushed and was not given an explanation of types of care information on how to select a provider or questions regarding her or her child's situation. Our caller was told to come to the office and complete an application. Other issues referenced the CCCS website and information not being current on a number of service delivery screens, etc. Ms. Buchbinder explained that for findings one and two, the Coalition is recommending additional training and oversight for all staff who answer incoming calls and that the website be updated. A corrective action plan is required within 30 days of receipt of the final report from the state on the tri-annual monitoring which has not been received at this point. A full copy of the Contract Compliance Monitoring Report for LifeStream Behavioral Center/Child Care Choice Services is in the packet for review. Members can contact Ms. Buchbinder with any questions.

Ms. Buchbinder ended the Director's report reviewing the ELC Association "Issue Papers" that were included in the packet. Regarding the Gold Seal program that was established in Florida Statutes in 1996, it was recommended that OPPAGA conduct a study of the Gold Seal program to determine if it meets the intent of the legislation and a review of the fiscal impact. The Issue Paper regarding VPK degreed teachers states the Association of ELC support efforts

to assist early learning and VPK providers in attaining higher education and training, but agree that this cannot be achieved without additional dollars.

Mr. Pruitt asked Ms. Buchbinder to continue with the Fiscal Report. Ms. Buchbinder stated that the fiscal analysis report and the utilization reports are in the packet. Ms. Buchbinder encouraged members to review the information at their leisure and to contact here with any questions.

Mr. Pruitt presented the Committee Updates. Mr. Ginn commented on the Professional Development Committee stating that there has been no recent action of the committee as initial applications received in September had been reviewed in January and we are now waiting for the end of the semester when the Reimbursement Applications, receipts and transcripts are to be submitted in late May, 2009.

Ms. Buchbinder commented that there was no action on the other committees.

Ms. Buchbinder moved on to Program Reports. The VPK report for March was included in the packet. The Coalition will hold its bi-monthly Provider meeting at the Coalition's office on April 9, 2009. The upcoming VPK 2009-2010 roundups and the provider requirements for the 09-10 program year will be discussed. There are two VPK trainings scheduled for April. As of March 27, 2009 2112 VPK children had been enrolled.

The Quality Report included in the packet indicates that though there is 33% of the year is remaining, there are more than 33% of quality funds still available. Ms. Buchbinder explained that there are several trainings and mini-grant initiatives that will be completed in April, May and June. Ms. Buchbinder stated that at this time there are over 2200 children enrolled in Lake's SR Program. The report shows an increase of 91 new children being served in March 2009. Several trainings were held during February and March that were well attended. Another Start with the Arts training is scheduled for May 16, 2009 in Umatilla. Ms. Buchbinder commented that the report indicates we have had a number of new providers come on board with ELCLC. Ms. Close is working with a few more potential providers in the Clermont area. Ms. Buchbinder was happy to report that KCI had contacted the Coalition and inquired as to whether or not the Coalition has a need for match dollars for the 2008-2009 program year. Ms. Buchbinder stated that she is working with KCI to secure the funds. As an update, Ms. Buchbinder stated that she is still waiting to hear back from the state on the provider rate increase that was requested. If approved, the increase will be retroactive to February 1, 2009.

The Program Outreach Report and the Big Blue Bus Report are included in the packets as well and Ms. Buchbinder encouraged members to review the information at their leisure.

There was no old business. Ms. Peggy Campbell introduced Ms. Charlotte Burkholder who will be doing the VPK program after she retires; Ms. Carlberg will be the liaison to the Coalition Board representing the School Board.

In closing, Ms. Buchbinder informed the Board that Blue's Beautiful Beginnings was broken into and that several pieces of their electronic equipment had been stolen. Ms. Buchbinder stated that she has offered her assistance to the Director if needed.

There was no other business.

Mr. Thompson moved to adjourn at 10:35 am.

Respectfully submitted by:  
Patricia Pierce  
Executive Assistant

Approved May 6, 2009