



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

Minutes Board meeting February 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. Thompson, Vice-Chair called the meeting to order at 9:08 a.m.

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

Mr. Thompson requested that since we are waiting on additional members to arrive, that the action items be held pending their arrival.

Mr. Thompson asked Ms. Buchbinder to present the Executive Director's Report. Ms. Buchbinder commented that there is a lot going in the legislature both in regular and special session. Ms. Buchbinder reported the good news that Governor Crist had vetoed the proposed reduction for school readiness programs. Director Brown sent an email summarizing the Governor's comments regarding the SR reduction and Agency for Workforce Innovation. Ms. Buchbinder also commented that Director Brown has submitted her resignation and the Deputy Director who has worked for two years with Ms. Brown, had been named Interim Director. The Governor's veto was good news for SR but other news was not so good for VPK. Ms. Buchbinder reported that the Legislators passed Senate Bill 6A which includes changes to the current VPK program year as well as future program years. Ms. Buchbinder commented that copies of the bill were included in the packets and encouraged members to review the document in its entirety at their leisure. Ms. Buchbinder continued to review some of the changes mentioned in the bill including a grant reduction to the base allocation for School Year and Summer programs as well as to the administrative cap. Ms. Buchbinder commented that though there were cuts to the base allocation and admin costs, there was an increase for marketing outreach and monitoring. Ms. Buchbinder explained that the reduction in the School Year base student allocation will result in \$53 reduction or \$.10 per hour per child effective February 1, 2009. The reduction in funding for summer VPK was more significant, \$438, but the ratio increased from 1:10 to 1:12. Mr. Thompson inquired about whether or not any centers were closing due to the reduction. Ms. Buchbinder commented at this time, only Sonshine School in Groveland has stated they are closing, but has not indicated that it is a direct result of the reduction. Ms. Buchbinder shared with the board that there is a new center opening in Groveland which is working with Sunshine to serve their children and possibly hire some of their teachers. Ms. Buchbinder also stated that Senate Bill 6A included some changes to the attendance policy for VPK and addressed automating some of the administrative functions for the program.

Ms. Sandy Stura asked specific questions regarding the automating of the process mentioned on page 11 regarding attendance and how automating the process in schools or private centers would work. Ms. Buchbinder commented that since a child will be considered full time at 80% attendance, that it will reduce the number of "mommy notes" that are required for the files and possibly save time in recording attendance. Ms. Stura asked if the requirements by DCF are different than those required for VPK teachers and further asking if licensing requirements require teachers to be rescreened every five years. Ms. Buchbinder said that the background requirements for the VPK program and child care licensing are different but efforts are being made to make those requirements more consistent.

Ms. Buchbinder moved on to discuss HB 501. This bill was written and filed by Representative Evers and as of this meeting, there has been no companion bill on file; however, it is expected that one will be forthcoming. The major concern with this bill is the issue relating to Early Learning Coalitions and whether the Coalitions should be abolished and the operation of the SR and VPK programs be transferred to the Agency for Workforce Innovation. If this bill were to be approved in the 2009 regular session, AWI must develop a plan whereas steps will be taken to transition programs by June 2010. Ms. Buchbinder commented that it would not be beneficial to close Coalitions due to their ability to raise large amounts of match dollars as well as the positive impact that Coalitions have on the local community. Ms. Buchbinder also stated that the bill requires that providers be paid at the prevailing market rate which would have a financial impact of approximately 94 million dollars. The bill also removes the requirement of a 5% CAP on administrative funds which could have a further financial impact. Ms. Buchbinder stated that at this time, the full intent of the bill is unknown. Also discussed were several legislative talking points that have been developed by the Association Legislative Committee.

Ms. Buchbinder reported that she would be going to Tallahassee along with the Executive Director from Marion County to meet with Senator Dockery and other legislative members. Ms. Buchbinder shared with the board that the intent of the visit is to discuss the importance of our early learning programs and the benefit of local Coalitions. There will be several Coalition Directors throughout the state meeting in Tallahassee with their area representatives. Ms. Buchbinder said that she will keep board members updated as more information is available. Ms. Stura commented that the budget is a big problem for everyone. Ms. Stura asked about the mood with other coalitions and state legislators and could this bill actually go through. Ms. Buchbinder said that other Directors feel this is a smoke screen for other issues. Ms. Buchbinder further stated that there is no documented proof that these recommendations will actually save state dollars. Ms. Buchbinder stated that several Coalitions are talking amongst themselves to explore ways to work together and possibly share services in an effort to streamline local processes. Ms. Stura asked if AWI is capable to step in right away and take over the program. Ms. Buchbinder commented that AWI says they do not support taking on services. Ms. Buchbinder commented that we need to continue to educate legislators on the importance the Coalitions and the importance of local control for our communities.

Ms. Buchbinder reported that Miami-Dade is in opposition to the recommended change and is writing a resolution to HB501. They know how effective Coalitions are and feel that Coalitions need to continue. The abolishment to save administrative dollars is not the answer. Ms. Buchbinder commented that she will explore the opportunity to work with the CSC and Commissioners of Lake County to build support for the continuation of early learning services to be offered at the Coalition level. Commissioner Stewart offered to take the resolution that was prepared by Miami-Dade for consideration for approval by the Lake County Board of County Commissioners.

Ms. Buchbinder proceeded with the Director's Report. The Lake County School Board met on January 26 and moved forward with the recommendation to offer the VPK program as a half-day or semester option for the coming 09-10 school year. At this time it is not sure which schools will offer what variations of the program. Ms. Buchbinder will meet with Ms. Campbell and Ms. Carlberg to get more information for the Provider meeting scheduled for February 12 so Providers can better plan how they will proceed for the upcoming year. Ms. Buchbinder stated that there has been good dialogue with both private providers and the school system and the resounding statement from providers is that they everyone needs to work together and collaborate on how to share information with the parents. Ms. Buchbinder stated that it was recommended that since the school system can't tell parents to go to private providers they can inform parents to contact the Coalition. Ms. Buchbinder further stated that the Coalition will be compiling a more detailed profile on our providers for the VPK provider profile booklets.

Ms. Buchbinder presented the 2007-2008 VPK preliminary readiness rate data which was provided by DOE. Ms. Buchbinder explained that the report shows that the statewide readiness rate average was 247. Ms. Buchbinder shared with the board that the preliminary Lake County readiness rate average was 253 which is 6 points over the statewide average. Ms. Buchbinder further stated that based on the preliminary data Lake County has five low performing providers (LPP) scoring 214 or below, with one LPP provider was on the list for the third year. Ms.

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Buchbinder explained that the current VPK LPP policy states that if a provider is on the LPP list on the 4th year, they can no longer do the program or they must provide verification as to why they continue as an LPP.

Ms. Buchbinder reviewed the remaining charts and pointed out the data indicates that children who participate in VPK do better in school than the children who do not go to VPK. The report also indicates that 91% of all VPK providers received rates. Additional information in the report indicates those children with physical or learning disabilities. Ms. Stura asked how these children are identified. Ms. Campbell commented that these are identified ESE students. Ms. Buchbinder reported that once the rates are final parents will be able to go online to view the readiness rates. Ms. Buchbinder stated that the readiness rate report card will include how many children participated in the program and the percentage of children who were ready for kindergarten.

Ms. Buchbinder proceeded with the Quality initiatives report, referring to the flyers included in the packet for the various trainings in February. Ms. Buchbinder stated that the next scheduled new provider orientation will be in February and at this time there are 3 new centers signed up to attend. Ms. Buchbinder stated that there were 4 potential providers who attended the January orientation. Ms. Buchbinder shared with the board that there has been an increase in the number of calls to the Coalition regarding the process to become a new SR provider. Ms. Buchbinder further stated that providers are reporting that due to the economy more parents are needing subsidized care which means more centers must be approved to offer the services.

Ms. Buchbinder reported that in January Ms. Betsy Harrington from Healthy Start had approached her to discuss the need for an educational curriculum for expecting and new mothers and inquired as to whether the Coalition had any funding to support the initiative for Lake County parents. Ms. Harrington provided two sample copies of the curriculum, one for expectant parents on the importance of prenatal care and one for parents with children birth to 36 months. The books were placed on the meeting table for review by the Board members. Ms. Buchbinder explained to the board members that Healthy Start applied to the CSC for funding to purchase curriculum but was not awarded funds due to the budget reductions at the county level. Ms. Harrington informed Ms. Buchbinder that about 90 low income parents could be served between February and June and that 95% of those families currently qualify as risk parents. Ms. Buchbinder stated that the curriculum would cost about \$12 for each book. The cost for the five months could range from \$1,090 to \$8,000. Many parents may begin the program but not all will continue with the program for the entire five months. Ms. Buchbinder commented that if the parents begin the program and receive the curriculum, then they will have the opportunity to learn of the availability of school readiness services as well as possibly qualify for extended child care services provided through Child Care Choice Services.

Ms. Buchbinder also commented that the Coalition budget has Infant/Toddler funds available that could be used for this purpose if the Board chooses to move forward with the collaboration. Ms. Buchbinder commented that FS411 does allow local collaborations with community partners to ensure early education and care for expecting parents. Ms. Buchbinder stated that Healthy Start would purchase the curriculum up front and work with their clients to distribute the information locally. Ms. Buchbinder stated that other ways to collaborate would be by distributing Healthy Start information through the Big Blue Bus program. Ms. Olszanski commented that Healthy Start has a lot of brochures with parent access to valuable information on SIDS, safety in the home, or environmental issues that can be distributed at CCCS. Mr. Thompson asked Ms. Buchbinder if she would like to have a motion on the table. Ms. Buchbinder stated that she would need a motion to move forward with the collaboration with Healthy Start to purchase the curriculum and further define the program which would serve expectant mothers and children birth to 36 months. Specific details such as reports, deliverables, tracking of parents, etc., will be defined in the upcoming weeks.

Ms. Rowin moved to approve an agreement between Early Learning Coalition and Healthy Start for the purchase of curriculum and collaboration of services for expectant mothers and infant/toddlers not to exceed \$10,000, seconded by Dr. Brockington. Motion carried. Ms. Buchbinder stated that the dollars spent will not exceed any preapproved allocation in the budget.

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Ms. Buchbinder moved to the OEL Correspondence, pointing out a letter from Director Brown announcing her resignation. Ms. Buchbinder shared with the board that she has been given the opportunity to have a courtesy review of the draft copy of the 2008 Performance Review which was conducted in July 2008. Ms. Buchbinder reminded the board of the initial concerns addressed during the exit interview in July and stated that the same concerns were addressed in the review document. Once the final draft is released the next step will be for the Coalition to submit a corrective action plan. Ms. Buchbinder shared with the board that some of the recommendations that were made by the review team are already in progress.

Ms. Buchbinder referred to the updated draft copy of the Annual Report that is on the table for review by the members. The format is in a new booklet style and can be printed from the new copier which will help to reduce printing costs. The final print of the Annual Report will hopefully be ready by the March 4, 2009 board meeting for distribution.

Ms. Buchbinder reported on the large amount of surplus SR dollars due to the economy. Ms. Buchbinder commented that parents are losing their jobs or are working fewer than 20 hours a week; either way they are not meeting the eligibility requirements. Ms. Buchbinder informed the members that Coalitions are asking the state to develop a proposal to waive some of the guidelines for eligibility such as the 30 days break in employment requirement and the average minimum number of hours worked per week which would help more parents become and remain eligible for services. Ms. Buchbinder stated that any changes to FS 411 would have to go through a legal process which includes notification to all Coalitions. Ms. Allison commented that she would like to talk with CCCS to work out a situation she has regarding the numbers of hours parents work and the number of hours of care for the children. Ms. Buchbinder commented that it is unclear as to what waivers will be allowed at this time.

Ms. Buchbinder reported to the Board that Mr. Biddle had submitted his resignation from the Board in January, stating that he is working at the UCF Campus in Orlando and will be unable to attend the monthly meetings. Ms. Buchbinder also commented that the Board now has two vacant seats for Governor appointees and she will check with the Governor's office to see if they are ready to make new appointments. Ms. Buchbinder commented that the Coalition is always looking for new Board members. She has received names of a couple of people who might be good candidates and will follow up on those. Ms. Buchbinder asked members remain focused on recruiting for membership, and to contact her if they know of someone who would be a good fit for the board. Ms. Buchbinder also informed the Board that Ms. Peggy Campbell will be retiring from Lake County Schools on April 30, 2009. It has not been determined who will be named as delegate for the School Board.

Mr. Thompson determined that a quorum was present and asked the members to proceed with the action items 368 and 368B before any voting members needed to leave due to the meeting going longer than usual. Mr. Thompson asked if anyone had questions or wanted to discuss either item; no discussion requested. Ms. Jeanie Rowin moved to approve action items 368 and 368B, seconded by Dr. Brockington. Motion carried.

In reference to item 368B, Ms. Buchbinder commented that Ms. Green had contacted her regarding a Memorandum of Understanding that Head Start is required to obtain with all Early Learning Coalitions based on recent changes in legislation. When Ms. Green approached her with the agreement, there was not enough time to get the Board's approval on the document and get it off to Atlanta by their deadline. Ms. Buchbinder stated that the MOU was a collaboration effort to work together to facilitate trainings, share space and offer other collaboration whenever feasible.

Ms. Buchbinder concluded the Executive Director's report and moved on to the Fiscal Report which was included in the Board packet. Ms. Buchbinder said the Coalition is ahead of the game with administrative expenditures, eligibility dollars and direct services. Ms. Buchbinder pointed out the Utilization Report from CCCS on page 48. Ms. Buchbinder and Ms. Olszanski met to discuss and make significant changes in the surplus projections. The surplus dollars are down significantly from the projected amount last month to a new projected \$258,000. There is no waitlist at this time. Ms. Buchbinder stated that since the Coalition is projecting a surplus and since the waitlist is currently at

zero she and Sherry had met to discuss a potential rate increase for Infants and Toddlers. Ms. Buchbinder stated that Sherry had prepared several reports indicating the fiscal impact of a potential rate increase. Initial projections indicate that there would be enough dollars to consider a \$5 dollar per week rate increase for Infants, Toddlers and Twos. A recommendation may be presented at the March 4, 2009 Board meeting effective March 1, or possibly February 1, 2009.

Ms. Buchbinder commented that she has asked Ms. Michele Reid to research question about submitting provider rate reimbursement with the request; if we should do it now due to the surplus. Next year, if there is a projected deficit, then discussions we'll need to take place around the various options including, activating the waitlist and allowing attrition to balance the budget, As well as possible reducing care for the schooler population, as our priority is birth through 5. Ms. Buchbinder commented that the Coalition has a disenrollment policy already in place and that it would be followed if necessary. Ms. Olszanski is working on these projections and will provide recommendations as necessary. Mr. Thompson commented that an increase in provider rates has been a long time coming and is much needed. Ms. Buchbinder commented that some Coalitions limit their enrollment based on target ages annually. Ms. Olszanski stated that there are 980 children from 0-3 years and 736 children 4-12 years of age, and that an increase at this time could be done without any cuts in school age children.

Ms. Buchbinder commented that Mr. Ammons in a conference call last week requested that Coalitions consider returning their SR dollars that were not cut so other coalitions who are in a deficit can be given additional dollars. Ms. Buchbinder stated that some Coalitions want to use their surplus now because of potential cuts next year. Ms. Buchbinder further stated that we need to use the SR funds allocated to Lake County in Lake County. Ms. Buchbinder asked Ms. Reid if she thought the State would grant authorization for the provider increase. Ms. Reid commented that she thought it would not be a problem as we have the surplus and we should be able to use it. Ms. Allison asked if it would be possible to provide grants for schoolers. Ms. Buchbinder commented that collaborations with the Boys/Girls clubs and YWCA, as well as other agencies should be considered as there are programs out there designated for our schooler population. Mr. Thompson said it would be good to deal with other agencies and to see what other Coalitions are doing to offer services to schoolers. Ms. Rowin suggested that maybe a schoolers program could be used to assist children with doing their homework. Mr. Thompson wanted to make sure we are not tying an infant/toddler increase to a disenrollment of schoolers. Ms. Buchbinder commented that at this time the increase is not tied to a disenrollment. In the future if a reduction in care levels is needed, Ms. Buchbinder commented that there are creative ways to give parents one to two years time to plan for the change. Ms. Olszanski commented that due to the economy match dollars are down and it will be necessary to use some of the surplus to draw down to serve children.

Ms. Buchbinder moved to the Committee reports stating the reimbursement checks for the fall semester had been cut and sent to those applicants that had been approved at the December PDC meeting. The deadline for applications for the spring 2009 semester was extended from January 31 to February 2, 2009 as the 31st was on a Saturday. The committee will be called together to do a preliminary review on those applications.

The Screening and Assessment Committee, the Curriculum Advisory Council and the Provider Growth and Development Committee had not met therefore there was no action. Ms. Buchbinder commented that in light of Mr. Biddle's and Ms. Edgington's resignations, there were seats vacant on the Professional Development Reimbursement, Provider Growth and Development and the Screening and Assessment committees and asked members to contact her if they would like to serve on any of those committees.

Ms. Buchbinder referred to the Program Reports that were included in the board packet. Ms. Buchbinder commented that the Early Education Specialist were in attendance at an Environment Rating Scale training by Ms. Thelma Harms which will strengthen their knowledge in both ITERS and ECCERS assessments. Ms. Buchbinder also mentioned that the annual Uniting for Children Conference will be held at Leesburg High School on April 4, 2009. The facility is great and the building and classrooms are closer together which will be easier for the attendees. The deadline for proposals for the conference is Friday, February 13 and the committee will meet to review the presentation proposals

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that are submitted. Ms. Lisa Murphy will do the keynote session and three workshops. Due to an expected record number of attendees, the Coalition will need to limit space to the first 90-100 paid registrations for Ms. Murphy's workshops as the classrooms will only hold 25-30 people.

Ms. Buchbinder referred to the Program Outreach Report. The Big Blue Bus has traveled to several appointments and events in the community. Power Tech has informed the Coalition that the generator on the Eagle Bus needs to be replaced and Mr. Hartman is writing a grant request to 1st National bank of Mt. Dora for \$2,500 to be used towards a new generator. Ms. Buchbinder reported that the CSC funds were reduced this year and cannot cover the repairs on two buses. The application for the upcoming year for the CSC grant is due February 23, 2009 and the Community of South Lake grant is due on March 31, 2009. Ms. Buchbinder encouraged members to review the additional program reports in the packet and to call her if they have any questions.

Mr. Thompson called for Old Business. Ms. Buchbinder thanked Ms. Nancy Allison for her assistance with the Mr. HAPPY training that was held recently. The trainer was in Florida therefore offered a reduced rate to do the Saturday training. The fee was \$750 of which attendees paid \$740 through a \$10 registration fee. If a minimal registration fee can be secured in the future, we may be able to provide additional trainings like Mr. HAPPY.

Mr. Thompson called for New Business. Ms. Donna Gregory, Lake County Health Department, shared information about their new dental clinic which moved from Lake-Sumter Community College to a new facility on Hwy 27 in Fruitland Park. The clinic primarily will serve children on Medicaid and emergency services for adults/kids without insurance. Ms. Gregory provided brochures telling about all the services through Healthy Start and WIC. There was also a flyer available about an event on February 27, the Tooth Mobile and possibly the Big Blue Bus will be there. Ms. Buchbinder stated that there is a need for additional Teen Parent providers in Lake County. Ms. Buchbinder stated that if any of the providers in attendance were interested to contact the Lake County School Board.

There was no other business.

Ms. Rowin moved to adjourn, seconded by Dr. Brockington. Motion carried.
Meeting adjourned at 10:42 a.m.

Respectfully submitted by:

Patricia Pierce
Executive Assistant

Approved March 4, 2009