



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

Minutes January 7, 2009 Board Meeting

Members in attendance: Mr. Will Pruitt, Mr. B.E. Thompson, Ms. Nancy Allison, Mr. Hugh Brockington, Ms. Peggy Campbell, Ms. Marsha Carpenter, Ms. Donna Gregory, Mr. Hays Ginn, Dr. Barbara Howard, Ms. Porcha Green, Ms. Sherry Olszanski, Ms. Cheryl Ridley, Ms. Jeanie Rowin, Ms. Darnell Stewart and Commissioner Linda Stewart. **Members Absent:** Ms. Stephanie Ellis, Ms. Michele Rawls and Mr. Jeff Biddle. **Staff in attendance:** Ms. Lesha Buchbinder and Ms. Patricia Pierce. **Guests present:** Mr. Bill Hartman, Ms. Alison Petrie, Ms. Cindy Winkle, Ms. Kathryn Sutherin and Ms. Michele Reid, AWI.

Mr. Pruitt called the meeting to order at 9:05 a.m. Mr. Hartman lead the invocation and pledge of allegiance. Ms. Buchbinder confirmed a quorum was present.

Mr. Pruitt presented Action Item 357, the Draft Minutes from the December 3, 2008 Board meeting and asked if anyone had questions or if a discussion was needed. Mr. Thompson moved to approve the minutes seconded by Ms. Cheryl Ridley. Motion carried.

Mr. Pruitt asked Ms. Buchbinder to proceed with the Executive Director's Report and he would do the Chair's Report after all items have been reviewed.

Ms. Buchbinder provided an update on the proposed school readiness budget reduction that was discussed at previous board meetings. Ms. Buchbinder commented that she had received notification that if the State's proposed \$66,754 reduction is approved it would be effectively immediately. Ms. Buchbinder commented she is working with Ms. Olszanski on a strategy to utilize any projected surplus of child care dollars. Ms. Buchbinder commented that since there are no children currently on the waitlist that providers need to notify parents having difficulty with paying for child care and refer them to CCCS. Ms. Olszanski and Ms. Hoban provided an update on the requirements for eligibility for the various OCAs. In some cases both parents needed to be working, while in other cases only one parent was required to be employed. Ms. Buchbinder commented that recently CCCS worked with a parent who did not meet the minimum requirement for the number of hours worked per week. Ms. Buchbinder further commented that the requirement is an average of a minimum of 20 hours per week and the parent had only averaged 19.75 hours therefore they didn't qualify.

After discussing other situations experienced by parents, Mr. Pruitt asked Ms. Buchbinder to research the State statutes to see how much local control the Coalition would have to make changes to the requirements for eligibility. Also, Mr. Pruitt requested that she look into stipulations regarding loss of jobs due to the economy or other extenuating circumstances. Ms. Allison commend that she has seen low to middle class parents who are employed but are working fewer hours and some are slightly over the income level. Mr. Pruitt stated he thinks the statutes may already have given Boards some control that would allow for adjustments to the guidelines. Mr. Thompson suggested that maybe employers might be able to do 50% payroll deductions before taxes for employees to pay for childcare. This may help them meet income guidelines. Also, CCCS could contact Workforce Central to see if parents are following through with referrals. Mr. Pruitt said increased marketing for SR may help reach families who need childcare. Ms. Buchbinder commented that the VPK ads could be easily changed to focus on SR and that there is no waiting list for care. Ms. Hoban commented that many times parents on the waitlist didn't even qualify for assistance. Ms. Ginger Babb asked if parents would be eligible if they are attending school but not receiving any financial assistance. Ms. Buchbinder commented that this would need to be researched to see if any of the OCA's would allow both parents to be attending school. Ms. Buchbinder asked Ms. Green if

there were any slots available in Head Start. Ms. Green replied that their centers were maxed out. Ms. Buchbinder also reported that she has received a notice from Mr. Ammons requesting all Coalitions submit their re-obligation and de-obligation of funds. Ms. Buchbinder commented that some Coalitions have surplus dollars while others are in need of additional funds.

Mr. Buchbinder proceeded to the VPK update, briefly stating that the proposed fiscal reductions are being discussed in special session. Ms. Buchbinder commented that if the proposal is approved, a cut of \$53 per student for the school year program would go into effect immediately. Also, the same house bill references a reduction in student allocations for the summer program as well as a reduction in administration costs from 5% to 4.85%. The bill addresses the creation of efficiencies by automating VPK processes. Also being proposed is a change to the attendance policy which specifies that children attending 80% of the time would be considered for a full FTE and the teacher-student ratio for the summer program would go from 1:10 to 1:12. Ms. Buchbinder pointed out that a legislative contact list for those Lake County members on the Appropriations Committee was included in the packet.

Ms. Buchbinder provided an update on the securing of Coalition dollars. Ms. Buchbinder said she had received more calls in the past few weeks from SunTrust Bank than in the past five years. Ms. Buchbinder commented that they may have heard we were considering moving our accounts. The Coalition's funds were previously put into a sweep account; however, SunTrust has secured our account in a different program which is 100% FDIC insured and continues to earn interest. The account is secure through December 2009. Ms. Stewart commented that we should still consider moving to another bank, particularly since SunTrust waited until now to provide the services we needed. Ms. Buchbinder commented that she previously met with First National Bank and received a good proposal that is being considered for the future.

Ms. Buchbinder continued her report relating to the Coalition Board. Recently, the Coalition submitted amendments to the ELCLC bylaws that were approved by the State. In those amendments, it was referenced that the Coalition's *Annual Board Meeting* is to be held during the first quarter of the *calendar year* and not the *fiscal year*. Therefore, Ms. Buchbinder requested that the upcoming March 2009 Board meeting be held to include the Annual Board Meeting. This would not be a dinner and there would be no charge for to attend the meeting. Ms. Buchbinder commented that since the last annual meeting was held in August 2008, it would be too soon to do another dinner and request attendees to pay again. Ms. Buchbinder added that she will do something to make it a little more special, but not too much. Mr. Pruitt asked for a motion on the recommendation. Ms. Rowin moved to approve that the regular March 2009 meeting be changed to include the *Annual Board Meeting*, seconded by Mr. Thompson. Motion carried.

Continuing with the VPK report, Ms. Buchbinder referenced a letter to the Lake County School Board written by Ms. Allison. Ms. Buchbinder asked members to review the letter on their own. Ms. Buchbinder commented that on December 12, the VPK Committee of the school board met and it was the consensus of the committee that they would likely make a recommendation to the school board at their evening meeting on December 12 to go to a half-day (3-hour) program or full day (6-hour) program for non Title 1 children in public schools. If needed, their Title 1 children could do a 3-hour VPK with a wrap program. Ms. Allison commented that in talking to many providers, their fear is the consistency for the care of the children. Ms. Sutherin again, questioned where the referenced 3,131 number came from that is used by Mr. Ammons to make decisions. Ms. Allison commented that some parents and children won't choose VPK, as they are fine at their private providers. Ms. Sutherin asked if CCCS tracks the vouchers that are given out to see the number vouchers used in Lake County versus those used in other counties. Ms. Buchbinder said Ms. Hoban tracks the number issued but not where they are used. The question was also raised about children transferring vouchers from one school to another. Ms. Hoban said that no transfers are needed; when a voucher is obtained, it can be used anywhere. The state no longer requires that the voucher be used

in the issuing county. Ms. Campbell commented that there is a large population that still doesn't know about VPK; and whether there are 2100 or 3100 children, the number is not the important issue as much as getting the word out to all families. Ms. Allison commented that providers need to keep in mind that the school board is also taking a risk just as private providers, and their concern is the consistency and quality of care for the children just as it is for private providers. Ms. Campbell also said that the school Board as well as she and Ms. Carlberg have many years of education, experience and expertise in early education and will provide the best service for kids to help get them ready for kindergarten.

Ms. Buchbinder continued with the Executive Director's report stating that the readiness rates are included in the packet broken down by schools and will also be posted on the DOE website for review. The rates show how the children did going into kindergarten. These rates are a combination of all four year olds.

Ms. Buchbinder referred to the Quality Improvement information listing upcoming dates for provider trainings. Ms. Buchbinder commented on the Mr. HAPPY training scheduled for January 24, 2009 which is not on the list. Ms. Buchbinder further commented that Ms. Allison provided information that Mr. Jim Atkinson, aka Mr. Happy, was going to be in our area and that he was a wonderful trainer. Ms. Buchbinder spoke with Mr. Atkinson, who has relatives in the area, and has agreed to do half-day training for the Coalition and waive travel expenses. A 3-hour session costing \$750 will be held on a Saturday January 24 from 9-12 at Kids R Kids Kids Klub, who has agreed to host the training. A fee of \$10 per attendee will be received to help pay for the training. Also listed in the packet are two trainings that will be held by CCCS at the Coalition offices during January.

Ms. Buchbinder pointed out that included in the packet are minutes from DOE meetings referencing the budget cuts, and information for contacting legislative members of the Appropriations Committee. Ms. Buchbinder also pointed out the response from the annual SR/VPK eligibility determination review. If members have any questions they can call Ms. Buchbinder for assistance.

Ms. Allison asked how it would work if the VPK budget reduction were approved for immediate implementation. Ms. Buchbinder said it would be taken from the bottom line; which means the grant award would be reissued indicating the reduction per county. Depending on what happens during the 2009 Regular Session, there is a possibility for additional reductions for the 2009-2010 Program Year.

Ms. Buchbinder informed the members that Ms. Donna Gregory has been named as Designee for Lake County's Health Department, replacing Ms. Cindy Freeman.

Mr. Pruitt asked Ms. Buchbinder to briefly comment on the Financial Report. Ms. Buchbinder encouraged members to review the enclosed Fiscal Analysis and the Utilization charts and related information and to contact her if they have any questions or concerns. Ms. Buchbinder did state that the numbers for a potential surplus are being worked up, adding that there is 58.1% remaining in the budget at this time.

Mr. Pruitt moved on to Committee Reports. Mr. Ginn, Chair of the Professional Development Committee reported that the Committee met on January 7, 2009 to do the final review of the fall applications. The majority of the files were approved previously pending final submission of book receipts and transcripts at the end of the semester. There were several applications that were missing important documents such as the FAFSA and verification of degree courses. Those applicants had been contacted by Ms. Buchbinder to obtain the remainder of the paperwork. Those files were approved on January 7, however payment will be held until all information has been obtained.

Ms. Buchbinder reported that the remaining three committees had not met and there was no report at this time.

Moving on to Programmatic Reports, Ms. Buchbinder commented that the reports are in the packet for review and asked members to review and call her with any questions. Ms. Buchbinder reported that Ms. Close, Quality Operations Manager, is out of the office on medical leave for several weeks. Ms. Buchbinder commented that the Education Specialists have been busy completing the Health & Safety checks at our unregulated centers, as well as assisting with various trainings etc.

Mr. Pruitt called for Old Business. There was none. Mr. Pruitt asked for any New Business. There was none.

Mr. Pruitt asked members to go to page 27 of the Executive Director's report. The page is an attachment to the *FY 2008-09 Recommended Spending Adjustments* at the state level. This document referenced various agencies and projects that are being considered for reductions, the source of revenue and the amount being considered for cuts. Mr. Pruitt specifically commented on the NR (Non Recurring) category. The total cut for the NR shows \$561,529,814. Last year in special session, \$56,000 was added for special projects that are now being cut. During the months of March through May, legislators will be looking to cut recurring dollars used to operate the State. Mr. Pruitt commented that by the end of May, the goal is to find \$2.3 billion dollars to cut from the State budget. Mr. Pruitt further commented that it is not only VPK dollars being cut stating that the Lake County School Board has already cut salaries, bonuses for next year and incentive pay. Mr. Pruitt also stated that at this time the legislators will not accept any new proposals for special projects.

Ms. Buchbinder reported that some legislators are already asking the question whether or not Coalitions throughout the state are effective. Ms. Buchbinder said that it is very important for everyone to watch the special sessions and any new bills that come up relating to School Readiness, VPK and Coalition local control. Mr. Pruitt said that we are all going to be facing some difficult times ahead and that we must do the very best that we can for the children. Ms. Buchbinder stated with the Coalitions receiving constant cuts, we need to educate the public. The Daily Commercial used to send a representative to our board meetings but that hasn't happened for several months. There is definitely a lack of communication between the media and the public at large on these issues. Mr. Pruitt commented that one out of about 160 legislators stands up and carries the torch for early education – Rep. Kurt Kelly. We all need to talk to our legislators and encourage them to support early education for our young children.

There was no further business.

Mr. Thompson moved to adjourn the meeting at 10:10 a.m.

Respectfully submitted:

Patricia Pierce
Executive Assistant

Approved February 4, 2009