



**BOARD OF DIRECTORS
AGE RANGE MEETING MINUTES
February 27, 2013**

Meeting: Early Learning Coalition of Pasco and Hernando Counties, Inc.
Board of Directors Meeting

Day/Date/Time: Wednesday, February 27, 2013 at 7 p.m.

Location: River Ridge High School
11646 Town Center Road
New Port Richey, FL 34654

Board of Director Members Present: Lisa Hammond, Chair; Dave Meglay, Vice Chair; James Cook, Jayne Goldstein, Steve Kanakis, Steve Knobl, Joe Mascaro, Patrick McHugh, Angela Porterfield, Jean Rags, Kathryn Starkey, Teresa Suarez

Board of Director Members Excused: Marsha Carpenter, Bonnie Clark, Ann-Gayl Ellis, Gus Guadagnino, Dawn Harvey, Heidi Rand

Coalition Staff Present: Danielle Berche, Kim Borrego, Bev Doucet, Pattie Eacobacci, Jim Farrelly, Jak Jakubauskas, Betsy Kier, Brenda Mayo, Katie Nelson, Robbin Schumacher

Guests Present: Cashawna Anderson, Boys & Girls Club of Hernando County; Jennifer Berger, Boys & Girls Club of Hernando County; Mara Bules, Maria Bules FCCH; Misty Burrows, Lighthouse Christian; Mercedes Colarte, Mercedes Colarte FCCH; Maria Figueroa, Boys & Girls Club of Hernando County; Gretchen Fremmer, Wee Care Preschool; Orlando Gonzalez, Marrero Large FCCH; Mary Grey, Pasco County School District; Mary Ann & Steve Habershaw, Solid Step Learning; Aracelis Hernandez, Aracelis Hernandez FCCH; Sara Monahan, Boys & Girls Club of Hernando County; Vincenza Neve, Little Rascals; Joyce Pappas, St. Nicolas; Josefa Polonia, Josefa Polonia FCCH; Xiomara Reyes, Xiomara Reyes FCCH; Aurora Rodriguez, RCMA Dade City; Tonya Ryan, ABC Academy; Elizabeth Sanchez, RCMA Dade City; Betty Smith, Small Blessings Christian; Jannette Stewart, Jannette Stewart FCCH; Tracy Ververs, Little Rascals; Michele Welch, Athenian Academy; Linda West, Linda West FCCH; Becky White, Early Life Academy

I. Welcome and Call to Order – Ms. Lisa Hammond, Chair

Ms. Hammond, Chair called this special meeting of the Early Learning Coalition of Pasco and Hernando Counties, Inc. Board of Directors to order at 7:02 p.m. Board members and staff introduced themselves and Ms. Hammond thanked all for attending.

II. Action Items

- **Adoption of Agenda**

Ms. Hammond requested a motion to adopt the agenda. Mr. Meglay so moved and Ms. Rags seconded the motion. All were in favor with no abstentions and the motion carried.

III. Sole Purpose of Meeting and Procedures – Ms. Hammond

Ms. Hammond explained this special meeting has been called to begin the discussion of a potential change in age range for School Readiness children. She explained that Coalition staff would present information to the Board of Directors; the Board will discuss the information and, if necessary, request additional information from staff. After this discussion, providers will then have an opportunity each to share their concerns with the Board.

IV. Presentation of Information and Data, Age Range for School Readiness Services

- **Mr. Jim Farrelly, Executive Director**

Mr. Farrelly stated he understands this is a difficult time, but the Coalition’s primary focus is on Early Learning and shrinking revenues have resulted in re-evaluating how the Coalition provides School Readiness services.

Mr. Farrelly directed attendees to page 2 of the administrative packet (attached) and explained in March of 2010 the Coalition established its mission “... to prepare children in our counties to enter and succeed in school.” In adherence to the mission, in May of 2010 the Board of Directors adopted the Age Range for School Readiness Services Policy.

Mr. Farrelly stated the percentage of funds the Coalition currently expends for children’s services puts it at or near the top of Florida’s thirty-one (31) Coalitions; spending the majority of its current School Readiness \$11.6 million dollar budget on direct services. However, this \$11.6 million dollar budget is expected to be reduced and it is now the Board’s responsibility to decide how to best spend these funds.

Mr. Farrelly explained options (page 3 of packet) are for the Board’s consideration. He explained the Coalition would be presenting three (3) perspectives: Enrollment Data, Program Data and Financial Data. Mr. Farrelly requested the Board make the following corrections to the Enrollment Date by Age Group chart: 0-4 year old column – change 2,276 to 2,011; 5 year olds (not school age) column – change 265 to 255, and under 5 year olds (before/after care) change 166 to 176. He explained these changes do not affect the percentage of total enrollment.

- **Ms. Betsy Kier, Assistant Executive Director**

Ms. Kier explained this Enrollment Data by Age Group chart shows what the Coalition's enrollment is by age group and noted that out of the total of 3433, 34% are school-aged children between the ages of 6-12 with 66% of children in the birth – 5 year old age range.

Ms. Suarez inquired if the 9, 10 and 11 year old statistics reflected mandated enrollments and Ms. Kier stated they were.

Ms. Kier directed the Board to the next chart showing the centers/family child care homes that are currently contracted with the Coalition and indicating the number of school age children enrolled. She explained the first column indicated the number of children in each center/home that would remain in the program; the second column indicates mandated age range children. Those centers/homes shown in red have ten (10) or more school age children enrolled. Ms. Kier stated the total number of school age children to be potentially removed from the program would be 599.

Commissioner Starkey inquired about the mandated categories and Ms. Kier explained what constitutes mandated services and that these children would not be affected.

Ms. Kier stated the Coalition's current wait list of 451 children would nearly be eliminated if the age range change was to be implemented.

Mr. Farrelly stated that Ms. Borrego would now discuss what other Early Learning Coalitions are doing and what other options are available to parents.

- **Ms. Kim Borrego, Program Manager**

Ms. Borrego explained the map included in the packet represents Florida's Early Learning Coalitions and the counties they serve. The next chart indicates the age range each Coalition serves. Ms. Borrego explained that in 2010, only 10% of Coalitions served 0-5; now eleven (11) additional Coalitions are serving only 0-5, an increase of 35%. She stated the ELC of Pinellas County serves 0-5, but ages 6-8 continue to be served in priority order, based on funding availability.

Ms. Hammond explained that some Coalitions do not spend their entire School Readiness budget and return funds to the state. Also, some Coalitions have other funding streams in addition to their state grants.

Ms. Rags inquired if the Coalitions serving 0-12 have wait lists. Ms. Hammond stated she believes that Manatee and Polk have wait lists, but some Coalitions may not due to their geographics. This information will be obtained and provided for future discussions.

Ms. Borrego continued, stating the 599 children that potentially would be affected have 203 community options with various ranges of pricing. She explained these children are already in programs so no new spaces would be needed; however, Coalition funding for these children would be eliminated.

Commissioner Starkey inquired if Hernando County Schools had a program similar to PLACE and was informed Hernando contracts with the YMCA and the Boys & Girls Club of Hernando County.

- **Ms. Danielle Berche, Finance Director**

Ms. Berche explained the Coalition's School Readiness budget for Direct Services is \$11,627,091. Of this amount, 86% of the funds are budgeted for direct services for children. The state only requires that 70% of the budget be spent on Direct Services, but this Coalition spends 86%, at or nearly the largest amount spent among Coalitions.

Ms. Berche explained the average annual cost for full-time care for a child aged 0 – 5 is \$4,746.73 and \$2,365.36 for a School Age child which includes the part-time fees during the school year and full-time fees during the summer and holidays.

Ms. Berche explained the range of care could be as high as \$7,800 annually for a full-time infant to \$1,300 for a part-time child, because of a large number of variables.

Mr. Farrelly stated he would like to summarize what the Board has just heard. The State of Florida requires Coalitions to spend a minimum of 70% on Direct Services for children. This fiscal year, this Coalition has budgeted 86%. The other 14% is applied toward: Administrative expenses - maximum allowed is 5%; In-direct Services - maximum allowed is 14% and Quality where a minimum of 4% is required which includes Gold Seal providers and incentives. Last year, the Coalition spent approximately 3.96% on administration, 4.63% on non-direct services and about 11% on Quality.

Mr. Farrelly stated the current level of funding is unlikely to continue. He cannot predict if the budget will be affected on March 1, 2013 but by July 1, 2013, the Coalition expects to see a difference. Currently, the wait list has more than 450 children with 364 of them between the ages of 0-5. Currently, 599 school agers are enrolled in before and after school care. If the current policy required 0-5 children to be considered as "Priority 1," the wait list would decline to 64 children.

Ms. Hammond stated that if additional funds could be secured, children aged 6-8 could receive services. However, she believes that the Coalition should serve as many children as possible so unused funds are not returned to the state. She inquired about the finances if the priority was changed to 0-5 and Ms. Berche stated it would depend on the variables, two (2) school readiness children are being served for one (1) 0-5 aged child.

Mr. Meglay inquired how the sequester would affect the Coalition. Mr. Farrelly replied the Coalition bills \$1.1 million monthly to the federal government via the state. He anticipates a loss of \$80,000 per month which equals 279 fewer children receiving services. However, these numbers could change.

V. Board Discussion and Questions

Ms. Suarez inquired what the cut off would be for children age 5 as children in the Pasco school district must be in school if their birthdate falls by a certain date. Ms. Kier replied

that children would be eligible to remain in care until they entered kindergarten. Ms. Suarez suggested changing the terminology to read 0 – kindergarten entry.

Ms. Suarez inquired about those children with disabilities whose parents keep them at home until they reach the age of 6 as the state does not mandate a child be enrolled in school until the age of 6. Ms. Kier stated a Board decision would have to determine if this would be allowable. Mr. Meglay suggested looking at it on a case by case basis.

Ms. Hammond inquired if this situation happened often and Ms. Kier informed her it does not and she is notified of these placements. Ms. Rags stated if additions are placed on the policy, exceptions should be on a case by case basis in an attempt to keep the wait list down.

Ms. Porterfield requested more information on the children who are considered “special needs.” Ms. Kier stated that children up to the age of 12 are currently placed in care if they are documented as “special needs.” This service will continue if needs are still documented, as currently required.

Mr. Farrelly stated that no proposal is being considered at this point. The discussion is whether to revise the Age Range due to the current wait list. This discussion is for input and then the Board of Directors may consider a proposal.

VI. Provider and Public Input

At 7:45 p.m. discussion was opened to the Public:

Ms. Cashawna Anderson, Boys & Girls Club of Hernando County stated her program offers before and after care and she does not know what will happen to the children as most parents lack the funds to pay more. She stated these children could be future leaders that got their start in the Boys & Girls program. The community needs to take care of the children through preschool and into kindergarten and elementary school.

Ms. Sara Monahan, Boys & Girls Club of Hernando County stated she works with children aged 0-5 and agrees with Ms. Anderson. She knows that working with children aged 0-5 is important, but the success must be maintained. She stated she was in a before and after school program herself. Even though children are already in these spots, without the funding assistance, where will they go?

Ms. Gretchen Fremmer, We Care Preschool stated her school is in Clearwater and the program is necessary to help children succeed in school. The children in her program who will be displaced do their homework in the program. The program supports children with their schoolwork. Ms. Fremmer spoke of the first age range change and stated that removing the funding from this age group would hurt providers even more. She inquired if it was really worth it to place an infant when some centers would have to close their programs.

Ms. Jennifer Berger, Boys & Girls Club of Hernando County stated she is a teacher with the 0-5 age group and believes the safety of children needs to be considered as

predators are in the community. If a parent works, it is possible they may leave their 6-year old on their own. Also some parents have other siblings who need care.

Ms. Misty Burrows, Lighthouse Christian stated her programs serve after school children and that PLACE is an option. However, co-pays barely meet the actual fee so how will parents pay the fees. Centers may lose siblings. Money is tight for centers and parents will do what they have to do such as leaving a 7-year old home alone. PLACE will also have waiting lists.

Ms. Aurora Rodriguez, RCMA Dade City stated her center has approximately 47 school aged children, but her program is also funded by the government based on income. She explained that 95% of their families do not speak English. They do have a program that provides tutoring and the school aged children require a great deal of help.

Ms. Tonya Ryan, ABC Academy stated a majority of their children are funded and they have concerns about multiple children. Parents have a problem with parent fees and centers are taking a loss. Any additional fees will be a struggle for parents.

VII. Board Discussion

At 8 p.m., Ms. Hammond closed the Provider and Public Input and brought the discussion back to the Board of Directors.

Ms. Rags commented that some centers had indicated they made accommodations for special hardship cases. Coalition staff presented 203 options and some parents may have to go to other options. She inquired if centers have been discussing the age range with their parents as they have known about it for a year. Ms. Rags does not believe that parents will be surprised, but will look at the options and should be encouraged to do so.

Ms. Rags continued saying the Board's decision will be difficult, but as the Coalition's budget is reduced, it must spend dollars wisely by spending the most on children. She encouraged attendees to speak to their legislators about the impact budget reductions have on children.

Ms. Hammond stated when the age range changed to 0-8 from 0-12; it was a difficult decision at that time. This is also not an easy decision, but the Coalition's mission is to serve the littlest ones whose pliable brains need loving, safe and attentive care. These brains can be built to succeed and the windows in some brains close after a time and we need to focus on ages 0-5 when 90% of the brain is still being developed.

She explained there will be no motion at this meeting. This meeting was scheduled to hear providers' sentiments. Ms. Hammond also encouraged attendees to speak with their legislators and attend county commission meetings where funding is discussed as Coalition staff attend these meetings and have no support from providers. Many people at these meetings do not understand the value of daycare. They need to be told how important active brain development is and how these children are being prepared to be the future workforce and leaders – this is not babysitting. She encouraged attendees to lend their support and future funding meetings at the local, state and now the federal level.

Ms. Hammond stated this topic will be brought before the Board of Directors at the March 28, 2013 Board meeting.

VIII. Adjournment

Ms. Hammond requested a motion to adjourn. Ms. Rags so moved and this special meeting of the Board of Directors of the Early Learning Coalition of Pasco and Hernando Counties, Inc. was adjourned without further discussion at 8:07 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by:

Ramute “Jak” Jakubauskas
Administrative Assistant