



**BOARD OF DIRECTORS  
MEETING MINUTES  
February 27, 2014**

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

**Day/Date/Time:** Thursday, February 27, 2014 at 8:30 a.m.

**Location:** Early Learning Coalition of Pasco and Hernando Counties, Inc.  
15506 County Line Road, Suite 103  
Spring Hill, FL 34610

**Board of Director Members Present:** Dr. Steve Kanakis, Chair; James Cook, Joan DeMauri, Gus Guadagnino, Josh Kelly, Dr. Steve Knobl, Joe Mascaro, Dave Meglay, Beth Narverud, Jean Rags, Toni Watkins

**Board of Director Members Excused:** Marsha Carpenter, Cathy Dofka, Pat McHugh, Angela Porterfield

**Board of Director Members Present via Phone:** Dr. Bonnie Clark (until 9 a.m.), Heidi Rand

**Board of Director Members Absent:** Diane Rowden

**Coalition Staff Present:** Danielle Berche, Kim Borrego, Bev Doucet, Pattie Eacobacci, Jim Farrelly, Jak Jakubauskas, Betsy Kier, Sherri Singleton

**Guests Present:** Ms. Jayne Goldstein, TodayCare Childcare Center at PHSC

**I. Welcome and Call to Order – Dr. Steve Kanakis, Chair**

Dr. Kanakis called the regularly scheduled meeting of the Early Learning Coalition of Pasco and Hernando Counties, Inc. Board of Directors to order at 8:30 a.m. He welcomed attendees and introduced the new governor appointees, Mr. Cook and Ms. Narverud. Introductions were made.

**II. Action Items**

• **Adoption of Agenda**

Dr. Kanakis requested a motion to adopt the agenda. Ms. Rags so moved and Dr. Knobl seconded the motion. All were in favor with no abstentions and the motion carried.  
(Action Item #1314-29)

- **Approval of Minutes, January 23, 2014 Board Meeting**

Dr. Kanakis requested a motion to approve the minutes of the January 23, 2014 Board Meeting. Ms. Rags so moved and Mr. Meglay seconded the motion. All were in favor with no abstentions and the motion carried. (**Action Item #1314-30**)

- **Treasurer's Report – Mr. Pat McHugh, Chair**

- A. Financial Statements – January, 2014**

In Mr. McHugh's absence, Ms. Berche explained that February's Finance meeting was an informational meeting only due to lack of quorum. She reported that the Coalition's Administration spending was at 3.29% for the month and 3.38% YTD; Non-Direct spending was at 6.77% for the month and 6.46% YTD; Quality spending was at 5.31% for the month and 5.29% YTD; and Direct Services was 84.63% for the month and 84.88% YTD.

VPK Administration spending was 3.09% for the month and 4.01% YTD which is slightly above the allowable maximum of 4%. Mr. Farrelly explained that Mr. McHugh typically combines Direct Services and Quality spending to show a total of 90% of School Readiness funds are being spent on services for children.

Dr. Kanakis requested a motion to accept the financials for January, 2014 as presented. Mr. Kelly so moved and Dr. Knobl seconded the motion.

Discussion: Ms. Rags inquired if a child's attendance is mandatory in the School Readiness program as she has learned that programs in other states do require children to attend. Ms. Kier explained that the rules and regulations are different from state to state. Currently, there are no discussions on attendance requirements being added to School Readiness here, but Eligibility Specialists note when a child has excessive absences and, if services are not being used regularly, the parent may lose those services. There are attendance requirements for the VPK program.

Ms. Watkins explained that VPK centers allow three (3) days of absence without a doctor's note, however more than three (3) days does require a note and most providers have attendance policies in place as they do not receive payment when a child is absent.

As there was no more discussion, Dr. Kanakis call for a vote to the motion. All were in favor with no abstentions and the motion carried. (**Action Item #1314-31**)

### **III. Remarks from the Chair/Executive Committee Report – Dr. Kanakis, Chair**

- **Tribute to Board Member**

Mr. Farrelly explained that a local organization was looking for volunteer and philanthropic nominations from non-profits and this individual was nominated for both categories. Unfortunately, he was not chosen, so the Coalition decided to honor Mr. Jim Cook. Mr. Cook was presented with an art piece created by children enrolled at Ms. Goldstein's center, TodayCare at PHSC.

Mr. Cook thanked everyone for the award and said it was not about him and dedicated the tribute to all.

Mr. Meglay recognized departing Chair, Ms. Lisa Hammond, by reading the (attached) narrative which was included within the tribute memorial presented to Ms. Hammond during the opening ceremony at last year's Storybook Forest event.

- **“WHEN YOU STOP GROWING, YOU START DYING”**

Dr. Kanakis stated he was very excited to have received the call from the governor's office appointing him as Chair and having this opportunity to be a part of early childhood education.

Dr. Kanakis believes in making a plan and part of the plan was to meet with the managerial staff and review their recent successes such as bringing VPK registration on-line, the annual Early Learning Conference, keeping overhead low, having a green office, having SAGE up and running, staff and providers are treated well and \$2 million dollars goes out smoothly every month to providers.

Dr. Kanakis has also met with providers who informed him they need to see more consistency among themselves. He believes this is where a quality rating system would be effective. QRIS (Quality Rating Improvement System) is a 1-5 star program so clients can quickly see quality centers. He believes this will increase quality among all providers as parents will want to choose a 5-star center for their children. Additionally, the providers have informed him they would like to have an increased voice in the Coalition and would like to see the provider meetings resume.

Another meeting with providers will be scheduled within the next few months.

- **Executive Committee Update**

Dr. Kanakis met with the Executive Committee to discuss what is perceived as complacency and malaise among the Board. He stated some boards require a \$5,000 donation to be a part of the board, but he doesn't want money, he wants time and talent.

The Board needs to drive policy and it needs to be an example in the community. The Executive Director does everything the Board has asked and above. However, Dr. Kanakis believes the Board should be the driving force and inquired of the members where they see the Board going.

Mr. Guadagnino explained today's business world is about team leadership and everyone around this table is a leader. The mindset must be “what can I personally do...” as getting Board participation has been difficult in the past.

- **Board Member Attendance/Participation: Board and Committee Meetings, Events**

Dr. Kanakis stated he will begin to hold members accountable after missing two (2) more meetings. He explained that more member attendance at events is also needed.

Mr. Guadagnino remarked for a volunteer board, it is a cardinal sin to have a board meeting and a member be absent and not have a reason not to be there.

Mr. Meglay inquired why the providers were requesting an increased voice in Coalition matters. Dr. Kanakis explained they feel as if they need to have a buy in on what they need and not feel subjugated. Regarding the provider meetings, Mr. Meglay stated meetings have been held in the past with low attendance results.

Ms. Rags inquired if the Board meeting packet should be sent to providers so they can attend the Board meeting if there is something on the agenda they would like to address. Mr. Farrelly explained the packet is not sent to the providers, but the agenda is posted on the Coalition's website as are the approved minutes of each meeting.

Ms. Watkins stated if providers want to be part of the School Readiness and VPK programs then they have to be responsible and accountable. She would also like to see the provider meetings return.

Mr. Kelly stated that as the Board's Provider Representative, he has begun to meet with providers who tell him they too would like to see the meetings return. Smaller centers don't understand how the Coalition works and are frustrated because providers do not share information as centers look at each other as competitors. Mr. Kelly believes the meetings need to begin again as providers have been disconnected.

Further discussion followed on limiting the number of curricula available to maintain better standards among centers as well as training VPK teachers on what kindergarten teachers would like children to know so they are better prepared. Mr. Farrelly explained the Coalition cannot mandate a curriculum and the state is working on a new system to process and review curricula so providers can send their own curriculum to the state for approval which could increase the number of curricula considerably.

Mr. Cook suggested obtaining feedback from teachers to learn what their needs are. Dr. Knobl explained that visits are made to Pre-K classrooms. He and Ms. Porterfield have gone to several elementary schools and stated there is a need for data to see what is working as education is constantly changing.

Dr. Kanakis stated he would like to have a discussion like this every six (6) months and together great things can be accomplished for the children of Pasco and Hernando Counties.

#### **IV. Consideration of Additional Spending Options for Contracted School Readiness Providers**

- **Background of Issue**

Mr. Farrelly presented the financial background, explaining that the Coalition has had a zero wait list since December and projected a \$1.7 million surplus. There is no carryover of funds and if the budget is not spent, funds must be returned to the state. The Coalition's wait list remains open with more children enrolling than being terminated. The surplus from December has declined to \$1.25 million as of the January 31, 2014 financial report. This surplus does not reflect the 7.5% provider rate increase, retro-active to January 1<sup>st</sup>, as OEL has just approved the increase.

- **Provider Survey Results**

Ms. Borrego explained a survey of five (5) questions was created to discover what providers felt they needed or wanted to improve their centers.

394 – the number of emails with the survey information sent to providers and teachers

146 – the number of individuals who opened the email

74 – the number of people who opened the email and clicked on the survey link

52 – the number of people who actually completed the survey

Ms. Borrego explained that out of 250 providers, only 52 actually participated or 13% based on a total of 394 emails.

Provider requests included children's libraries, classroom furniture, carpeting or ground cover, computers, computer software, developmentally appropriate materials, resource centers, curricula, training, parent resources and playground equipment.

Ms. Borrego explained the last question on the survey asked what the Coalition can do for them and some of the comments included more materials in Spanish and resource centers.

A brief discussion followed and Mr. Farrelly explained that 60-80% of contracted providers depend on the Coalition for their existence and that all 250 centers were invited to the meet and greet with Dr. Kanakis, but only four (4) centers were represented.

Ms. Narverud inquired if providers can be given an incentive to participate in the QRIS system. Mr. Farrelly explained that there could be a tie-in of QRIS to Quality incentive funds.

Ms. Rags stated that over the years the Board has known there were low performing providers, however, many are in demographically challenged areas and are the only providers available to children. The Coalition has been trying to reach and motivate these providers for years, but there is a need for better providers in areas such as Lacoche.

Mr. Kelly explained that one of his centers has a failing VPK program, but he emphasized that the center has taken in children that have been terminated from other centers and it also has a large number of children with IEPs (Individual Education Plan).

Ms. Watkins also explained that many parents do not have transportation to be able to reach a better quality center.

Ms. Rand explained that President Obama recently signed legislation to provide a \$500 million grant to Head Start for Early Head Start expansion including into Hernando County. There are no current programs there and Head Start will be looking for providers to partner with and offer special programs to children and to providers that want to do a better job, but do not have the funds. The funds from this grant will help with teacher training, subsidize fees and help to purchase classroom items. Ms. Rand explained that Head Start must have providers as partners and include them in the grant application.

Mr. Farrelly explained he has gone on record as saying the Coalition will assist Head Start in Hernando County as there is an existing model with Pasco County Schools. A meeting will be set to include Ms. Rand, Ms. Porterfield and Mr. Farrelly.

- **Updated Financial Projections (1/31/14)**

Mr. Farrelly explained that as of November 30, 2013, the surplus was \$1.7 million; as of December 31<sup>st</sup> it was \$1.5 million and as of January 31, 2014 it is \$1.2 million. He reminded the Board the Coalition has a zero wait list and an additional \$450,000 has been spent on the provider rate increase which drops the surplus to \$800,000. This balance will now depend on new enrollments. Mr. Farrelly explained he is comfortable with spending \$150,000 at this time.

- **Options for Board Consideration**

The (attached) Provider Spending Initiatives document was distributed. Mr. Farrelly explained page 1 depicted the funds already committed to providers from the Quality Budget and the rate increase. Page 2 has new funding considerations which has been compiled with recommendations from staff including Provider Specialists, Trainers and Inclusion Specialists.

Mr. Farrelly explained the Spending Recommendations on page 4 are based on the \$150,000 maximum with \$100,000 being allotted for Provider Instructional Improvement Initiatives, \$39,000 for a Children's Library Technology Initiative in collaboration with the Pasco and Hernando County Library Systems and \$11,000 for Social Emotional Development Initiatives.

If surplus funds still remain in March, other spending considerations can be made which could include additional developmentally appropriate instructional materials, classroom furniture, playground equipment and/or curriculum.

Discussion followed on the suggested E-readers for the libraries and if the libraries would have access to a match grant. Dr. Knobl explained that students at Rasmussen College are

working with local libraries by helping them with web design, etc. due to their lack of funds. Mr. Farrelly explained there are increasing requests for additional social/emotional training and the need for the additional kits.

Dr. Kanakis requested a motion to accept the spending recommendations as presented by staff. Ms. Rags so moved and Mr. Guadagnino seconded the motion. A roll call vote was requested with the following results (in no particular order):

Ms. Watkins – aye	Ms. DeMauri – aye	Mr. Kelly – aye
Ms. Rand – aye	Dr. Knobl – aye	Ms. Narverud – aye
Ms. Rags – aye	Mr. Guadagnino – aye	Mr. Mascaro – aye
Mr. Cook – abstain	Mr. Meglay – no	

The motion carried.

## **V. Executive Director Report – Mr. Jim Farrelly, Executive Director**

### **• Coalition Update**

- Mr. Farrelly introduced Ms. Goldstein as the Coalition’s new Volunteer Provider Mediator who will assist Coalition staff in grievance situations involving providers.
- He stated there is no wait list and there are approximately only three (3) other Coalitions who also have zero wait lists.
- There is state legislation on the fast track that will impact quality as related to DCF issues on parental notification and the state may rename the School Readiness program the “Child Care and Development Program.”
- Dates for future events include:
  - March 8 – Zephyrhills Founders Day Parade
  - April 5 – the 5<sup>th</sup> annual Storybook Forest event from 11 am – 2 pm with a ribbon cutting ceremony at 10 a.m.
  - August 2 – 2<sup>nd</sup> annual Preschool Palooza event
  - October 25 – 7<sup>th</sup> annual Early Learning Conference
- Mr. Farrelly informed the Board that next year’s State Early Learning budget contains \$30 million that has been pre-committed to preschool education including an additional \$100 per VPK child.

## **VI. New/Unfinished Business**

None.

## **VII. Public Input**

Ms. Goldstein explained she is a provider in Pasco County and was sad to hear about the lack of provider participation. She has forwarded a letter to be placed in the next issue of the Coalition’s “Spotlight.” She stated she does support the QRIS system and that many providers do not understand the dynamics of what the Board does. She explained that

working in a preschool is a stressful environment and that needs to be considered. Ms. Goldstein would also like to see the providers be held more accountable. She thanked the Board for the 7.5% increase and stated she too would also like to see the provider meetings return.

### **VIII. Adjournment**

Dr. Kanakis requested a motion to adjourn. Ms. Narverud so moved and this meeting of the Board of Directors of the Early Learning Coalition of Pasco and Hernando Counties, Inc. was adjourned without further discussion at 10:20 a.m.

Respectfully submitted by:

Ramute “Jak” Jakubauskas  
Administrative Assistant



**E**ight years ago, the Early Learning Coalition of Hernando County and the Early Learning Coalition of Pasco County faced an intense challenge in the business world: a merger of separate (and competing) entities.

At that time, there were 62 Coalitions in the state of Florida, each focused on their own to provide quality Early Education opportunities for children through Florida's free Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten program and its School Readiness program, providing subsidized childcare for eligible families.

As with most proposed merger efforts, spending was being reduced with efficiency as the focus. Early Learning Coalitions were directed to merge with their closest counterpart. It seemed to make sense for Hernando and Pasco counties to reach out to one another and start the lengthy process of combining the two complex agencies.

There were heated debates within the respective boards and proposed merged board of directors, as well as unflattering news articles throughout the lengthy process. Through the endeavors of a single person—newly appointed Chairperson **Ms. Lisa Hammond**, CEO of BHER Group in Hernando County, appointed by then Governor Jeb Bush—the debate softened. With Ms. Hammond's Leadership, both sides gave a little and soon the Coalition began its journey toward becoming a leading Coalition in the state of Florida, eventually named one of the Best Companies in Tampa Bay (*Tampa Bay Business Journal* and *WEDU*, 2009, 2010, 2012) and one of the Best Non-Profits to work for in the country (*Non-profit Times*, 2012)

The newly formed Board of Directors, under Ms. Hammond's leadership, was soon tasked with locating an Executive Director who would lead a small team of dedicated employees and bring the two counties of childcare providers together to provide services for the ones who deserve it most: our children.

Ms. Hammond volunteered long hours and searched nationwide, holding many interviews to find the 'right' leader to complete the tasks needed. She worked with the newly appointed Executive Director to hire quality employees, bringing the team from a small group of 8 to 42 and from a single office to four - offering thorough services to residents of both counties. Furthermore, Lisa's work was recognized by the State, and then Governor Charlie Christ reappointed her as Chairperson.

The positions added benefited the children by including interventional experts on behalf of children with special needs, a professional trainer for childcare providers, mobile outreach staff and dedicated managers leading the way for all Coalition employees.

Ms. Hammond also shepherded the movement to bring all formerly contracted services in house, eliminating contracted services and in so doing, saving \$500,000 which was spent on providing direct instructional for children.

Florida's Office of Early Learning regulates the Coalition, and those regulations include certain budgetary restraints. While other Coalitions fail to meet the standards, Pasco/Hernando consistently falls well below the administrative cap of 4% of administrative spending, and goes beyond the required 70% spent on direct services for children. More than 85% of the budget is spent on direct services for children, allowing the Coalition to achieve its mission of serving as many children as possible, preparing them to enter and succeed in school.

Children deserve an education, and Ms. Hammond knows that brain development during those first five years of life are critical. She consistently searches for ways to further involve our local communities by providing free educational events like "Storybook Forest"—a celebration of literacy where children's stories are brought to life through interactive displays and activities—and "Eat Smart for a Healthy Start"—which provides children with the tools they need to learn how to live healthy, all packed into a brightly colored lunchbox.

This movement toward an efficient organization focused on children has proven to be a success. The Coalition has been recognized in the community for its transformation. In 2012, the Coalition was named the "Best Nonprofit to Work For" in the nation by *The Nonprofit Times*, and was the recipient of the WEDU "Be More" award, voted on by community members.

The work Ms. Lisa Hammond has done for the Coalition and for children goes beyond what one can ask of a volunteer. Her strength and compassion led an organization once on the verge of complete destruction into a time of celebration, recognition and achievement, focused on providing children with the education and opportunities they deserve, and the hope that they will become the successful leaders we have envisioned our children to be.

***She is a true hero, a champion for children.***

## **PROVIDER SPENDING INITIATIVES, FY2014**

- For Consideration by the Board of Directors: 2/27/2014 –

### **I. FY2014 FUNDS ALREADY COMMITTED TO PROVIDERS**

#### **A. Quality Committee: \$115,497**

- Provider Incentives: 100K budgeted; \$27K used
- Classroom Libraries: 42 @ \$275 (\$11,550)
- Scholarships (15), Professional Org Membership (\$1,935)
- Scholarships (4), Family Child Care Conference (\$2,012)

#### **B. Board of Directors: \$450,000**

- 7.5% Provider Rate Increase: \$450K thru June, 2014

**ADDITIONAL FUNDS COMMITTED TO PROVIDERS: \$565,497**

## **II. NEW FUNDING FOR BOARD CONSIDERATION**

### ***I. Source: "Proposed Additional Spending Plan" (January '14):***

- **Provider Instructional Improvement Initiative (\$100K)**
- **Children's Library Technology Initiative (\$39K)**

### ***II. Source: Discussion, Board of Directors (January '14):***

- **Replacement of books, bookshelves, toilets, etc.**
- **Playground equipment**
- **Determine and meet provider needs**

### ***III. Source: Provider Requests: Survey Results (February '14)***

- **Survey results as presented by Kim Borrego**

### ***IV. Source: Recommendations of Provider Specialists/Trainers***

- ***Mathematics/Science/Language instructional kits***
- ***Social/Emotional Development kits***
- ***Professional Development Trainings, Children w/ Special Needs***
- ***"Make and Take" Trainings***
- ***Playground Equipment***
- ***Tech upgrades for Child Care Management***

**V. Source: Provider Representatives to Board of Directors**

- ***Social-Emotional Development Initiative***
- ***Technology and computer software (record-keeping)***
- ***Playground Equipment***
- ***Curriculum***
- ***Classroom Furniture***
- ***Developmentally Appropriate Materials***
- ***Libraries for Children***

## **SPENDING RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. Considering funds availability and their potential impact on achievement of the Coalition’s MISSION (“*To Prepare Children to Enter and Succeed in School*”), as well as the source, frequency and support for these initiatives, the administration recommends the following additional spending initiatives for board consideration:

- **Provider Instructional Improvement Initiative (\$100K)**

Early Educator’s spending on instructional supplies, games, toys, etc. has dramatically declined during the recent (and current) economic downturn. While some contracted providers have permanently closed their doors, others remain open but operating “on a shoestring budget.”

Providers’ voluntary spending on renewal of instructional supplies, equipment, books, games, toys, etc. is not occurring as evidenced by onsite observation and a steep decline in applications for the Coalition’s incentive program which offers 50% return on virtually ANY instructional purchase.

The Community Instructional Improvement Initiative sets aside \$100K in Quality Improvement funds to be distributed on a competitive, needs basis. Applicant Providers’ need for infusion of updated instructional materials will be assessed by Coalition Provider Specialists and if awarded, materials selected by contractors/Coalition staff and purchased by the Coalition, will be accompanied by an agreement to immediately utilize purchased materials, subject to Coalition monitoring and return, if necessary.

- **Children’s Library Technology Initiative (\$39K)**

The thirteen (13) community libraries within our counties receive thousands of visits annually from parents with children within the age range of Coalition services. “E-readers,” when available at some libraries, focus primarily on adult reading and learning opportunities rather than children’s activities and books, particularly not at the Early Learning level.

The Coalition would target up to \$3K per library for the development of a partnership with county libraries to foster technology familiarity, reading, and computer-based educational activities for young children.

- **Social Emotional Development Initiative (\$11K)**

This initiative sets aside \$11K in Quality Improvement funds to be distributed on a competitive, needs basis. Applicant Providers need for infusion of Social-Emotional skills will be assessed by Coalition staff – Inclusion Specialists and Provider Specialists. Awards will be accompanied by an agreement to attend trainings and immediately use purchased materials, subject to staff monitoring and return.

\$11K will purchase at least 30 additional “Second Step” training kits supplementing the 10 currently on hand.

**ADDITIONAL PROVIDER SPENDING RECOMMENDED: \$150,000**

2. As the current fiscal year progresses and additional surplus funds may be projected, the administration recommends continued consideration of the following additional spending initiatives:

- Additional Developmentally Appropriate Instructional Materials
- Classroom Furniture
- Playground Equipment
- Curriculum