



**BOARD OF DIRECTORS
MEETING MINUTES
October 26, 2017**

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

Day/Date/Time: Thursday, October 26, 2017 at 8 a.m.

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

Board of Director Members Present: Pat McHugh, Chair; Dr. Amy Anderson, Bimal Bhojani, Lisa Campos, James Cook, Gus Guadagnino, David Meglay, Robin Napier, Angela Porterfield, Neil Thompson, Miguel Velazquez, Mary Beth Wehnes, Mike Wells, Jessica Weightman

Board of Director Members Present via Phone: Adam Horn, Jessica Weightman

Board of Director Members Excused: Kathleen Casper

Board Members Unexcused: Kelli Boles

Coalition Staff Present: Carolyn Casler, Bev Doucet, Pattie Eacobacci, Jim Farrelly, Naomi Gillick, Rachel Hardy, Jak Jakubauskas, Betsy Kier, Ljubica Sevic

Guests Present: Lara Bradburn, Lynn Hollingsworth, Dr. Steve Knobl, Stephanie Leuthauser of Trenam Law, Jeff Webb

Guest Present via Phone: Katherine Boyd

I. Welcome and Call to Order – Mr. Pat McHugh, Chair

Mr. McHugh called the regularly scheduled meeting of the Early Learning Coalition of Pasco and Hernando Counties, Inc. Board of Directors to order at 8 a.m.

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited followed by introductions.

II. Action Items

- **Public Comment on any Action Items**

Mr. Webb read a letter of rebuttal related to the comments in the April 27, 2017 minutes. He also stated that the Board had received letter from his attorney.

- **Adoption of Agenda**

Mr. McHugh requested a motion to adopt the agenda. Mr. Thompson so moved and Ms. Campos seconded the motion. All were in favor with no abstentions and the motion carried. **(Action Item #1718-07)**

- **Approval of Minutes, April 27, 2017 Board Meeting**

Mr. McHugh requested a motion to approve the minutes of the April 27, 2017 Board Meeting as presented. Mr. Meglay so moved and Mr. Horn seconded the motion. Mr. McHugh called for a roll call vote. There were six (6) ayes, two (2) nays and eight (8) abstentions from current members who were not members at that time. The motion carried. **(Action Item #1718-08)**

- **Approval of Minutes, July 20, 2017 Board Meeting**

Mr. McHugh requested a motion to approve the minutes of the July 20, 2017 Board Meeting as presented. Mr. Thompson so moved and Ms. Campos seconded the motion. All were in favor with no abstentions and the motion carried. **(Action Item #1718-09)**

- **Approval of Minutes, October 13, 2017 Special Board Meeting**

Mr. McHugh requested a motion to approve the minutes of the October 13, 2017 Special Board Meeting as presented. Mr. Thompson so moved and Mr. Meglay seconded the motion. All were in favor with no abstentions and the motion carried. **(Action Item #1718-10)**

- **Treasurer's Report – Mr. Neil Thompson Chair**

- A. Financial Statements – July, August, September, 2017**

Mr. Thompson deferred to Ms. Hardy who reported that July's financials showed the actual spending rate for Direct Services was at 7.15% and all the minimum and maximum categories were well within the spending rates with 4.70% being expended on Administration and 84.76% on Direct Services for children. A match donation of \$3,708.10 was secured. A surplus of \$524,190.02 was being forecast which included \$242,450.48 of FY 17/18 direct services that were invoiced using FY 16/17 funds. The VPK spending rate was at 1.26% for the year.

Mr. McHugh requested a motion to approve the July Financial reports as presented. Mr. Thompson so moved and Mr. Guadagnino seconded the motion. All were in favor with no abstentions and the motion carried.

Ms. Hardy continued with August's financial report stating the actual spending rate was at 16.53% and all the minimum and maximum categories were well within the spending rate categories. She reported that Administration spending was at 3.55% for the year and Direct Services was at 86.19%. \$833.34 was secured for Match from the United Way of Hernando County bringing the year to date total to \$4,541.44. A deficit of \$219,493.23 is being forecast. The VPK spending rate was 8.58% with VPK Administration spending at 4.68% for the year.

Mr. McHugh requested a motion to approve the August Financial reports as presented. Mr. Thompson so moved and Mr. Velazquez seconded the motion. All were in favor with no abstentions and the motion carried.

Ms. Hardy reported that September's financial report showed the actual spending rate for Direct Services was at 25.02% and all the minimum and maximum categories were within the spending rate categories. Administrative spending was at 3.14% for the year and Direct Services was at 86.41%. An additional \$2,090.04 was secured for Match bringing the year to date total to \$6,631.48. A deficit of \$7,444.90 is being forecast. She explained this is due to school resuming and the removal of more than 200 children from the School Readiness program. For VPK, the Administration spending category was at 3.69% with 96.31% allocated for Direct Services.

Mr. McHugh requested a motion to approve the Financial Statements for September as presented. Mr. Thompson so moved and Mr. Velazquez seconded the motion. All were in favor with no abstentions and the motion carried. **(Action Item #1718-11 covers approval of July, August, September Financial Statements)**

III. Remarks from the Chair/Executive Committee Report – Mr. Pat McHugh, Chair

- **Report of Executive Committee Action Items**

Mr. McHugh stated a list of the Executive Committee's action items was provided with the meeting packet. He informed members that the Executive Committee had discussed changing the date and time of the regularly scheduled meeting, but no action was taken. They also discussed recording the minutes and having an attorney present at meetings, again no action was taken. The resignation of the Executive Director, Jim Farrelly, was accepted with regret and the Committee agreed to accept a contract in principle with Dr. Steve Knobl as the successor Executive Director.

Mr. Guadagnino inquired if the Board could see the contract and was informed the contract would be available once finalized. Dr. Anderson inquired about the surplus inventory. Mr. Farrelly replied this was non-working equipment and any equipment containing any type of memory component will have that part removed by IT and the equipment will then be properly disposed of.

- **Presentation of Coalition Annual Report (FY 2017)**

Ms. Kier presented and distributed copies of the new Annual Report to Board members and guests. A PDF version will be placed on the Coalition's website.

IV. Utilization Reports - Ms. Betsy Kier, Assistant Executive Director

Ms. Kier reported that School Readiness enrollments decreased by 271 children as enrollment in before and after care programs ended with the start of school.

The Coalition is pleased to report historically high enrollments in both programs with over 3,800 children enrolled as of September in School Readiness and 5,215 children enrolled in VPK. Ms. Kier reported that a caveat has been added to the VPK report that shows the number of children being served that are not residents of either Pasco or Hernando County. She explained for the VPK program there are no residency requirements, but the provider must be located within Pasco or Hernando County.

Mr. Farrelly stated that even with the high enrollment numbers, Hernando County is still lagging. Hours have been extended in the field office, but the largest problem is the lack of centers offering VPK in Hernando County. He explained the state's reimbursement for VPK funding has remained flat, but the demand for more work from the providers is increasing.

A brief discussion followed with Commissioner Well's stating that 50% of Pasco County's workforce leaves the county and he would be interested to know how many School Readiness parents work out of county. Mr. Farrelly indicated that such data would be provided.

Ms. Kier continued explaining that a new report for VPK SIS has been added. This program offers parents the option to either have their child in VPK or to have the state pay the \$2,400 allotted annually per child toward therapeutic services. Only eleven (11) children are enrolled in the SIS program this year and all are in Pasco County.

Mr. Thompson inquired if a report would be included on the gifted children's program. Ms. Casler reported this program is beginning to take off with six (6) open cases. Information on this program is being compiled by Ms. Casler and Ms. Melissa Hayes to present at the next Board meeting.

V. Committee Updates:

- **Finance and Audit Committee – Mr. Neil Thompson, Chair**

Mr. Thompson deferred to Ms. Hardy. Ms. Hardy explained that everything had been reviewed earlier except for a few budget revisions approved by the Committee. She reported the Coalition's annual outside audit will be presented at the January meeting.

- **Ad Hoc Fundraising Committee Update - Ms. Jessica Weightman, Chair**

Ms. Weightman reported the Spelling Bee event has been postponed to a later date due to lack of participation from the Board. A Committee meeting has not yet been re-scheduled to set a new date.

VI. Executive Director Report – Mr. Jim Farrelly

A. Report, 10th Annual Early Learning Conference

Mr. Farrelly reported the conference was held this past weekend and Dr. Knobl was the keynote speaker. Many positive reviews of the conference were received. There were a total of 809 paid registrations; of those registered approximately 150 did not attend. A total of 594 conference evaluations were turned in and only three (3) were critical of the event.

Mr. Farrelly explained the Coalition does not expend any funds on the conference - it pays for itself and several vendors have already paid, in advance, to participate at next year's conference. He also stated this is Florida's largest conference and takes a full year to prepare for by Ms. Doucet and her committee.

B. Coalition Update

Mr. Farrelly reported that a Hernando based provider has been issued a DCF Level I assessment for having a weapon and alcohol on their premises. They had also violated their School Readiness contract by not reporting another incident several months ago. The attorney has advised the Coalition not to terminate the contract until more information becomes available from DCF.

Mr. Farrelly reported the wait list, while closed for many months, now has nearly 600 children awaiting services. The wait list will not open if a deficit continues to be forecast.

C. Video, Update, Early Childhood Court - Ms. Betsy Kier

Ms. Kier explained that Judge Tepper and the Early Childhood Court provide nurturing environments to children and services are offered to families to assist with trauma. The Coalition has implemented the Circles of Security trainings that assist teachers in their classrooms. This voluntary training is an 8-week course and over 10% of the Coalition's providers and three (3) parents have participated. Due to technical problems, the video was shown towards the end of the meeting.

D. QRIS Expansion Proposal, “Sunshine Stars” (School Readiness) to “VPK Diamonds” (VPK Program) - Ms. Carolyn Casler

Mr. Farrelly explained Sunshine Stars was approved by the Board about 3-years ago to work with providers and improve the quality of their programs. The Coalition is now looking to expand the success of Sunshine Stars to VPK with the VPK Diamonds Program.

Ms. Casler distributed the attached VPK Diamonds proposal. She explained the focus will be to generate more providers for VPK programs and to foster competition between the VPK providers as information will be provided to parents on where to find high quality VPK programs. She is still in communication with OEL as to the level of data the Coalition will be able to receive from the STAR Early Literacy assessment to be used in the monitoring process.

Mr. Guadagnino inquired if teachers are being rated with certificates. Ms. Casler explained the center as a whole will be rated regardless of how many VPK teachers or classrooms each center has in place.

Ms. Casler explained the Provider Specialists will also do the evaluations on this program and it is tentatively scheduled to be rolled out in January. After a brief discussion, the Board's consensus was in support of the VPK Diamonds Program and they agreed it should be put into effect as of January, 2018.

E. Update, Years of the Young Child Events

Mr. Farrelly reported the next event is scheduled for November 3, 2017 and is titled "Festival of the Arts." Mr. McHugh stated that Mr. Curtis Arnett, one of the original Florida Highwaymen artists will be the featured guest. Mr. Farrelly also noted the event will feature artwork from local children as well. The event will be held at PHSC's Spring Hill Campus.

December's (12/2/17) event will be "Breakfast with Santa" in collaboration with the Boys and Girls Club of Hernando County. This will also be a free event, but it will have a limited number of tickets available. Storybook Forest is again scheduled to be held in March.

F. Foundation Update

Mr. Farrelly reported that membership recruitment continues to be a problem. The Foundation does plan to embark on a partnership with Safety Town to create a brick and mortar store front for children to visit.

At this time, the Early Childhood Court video was played.

VII. Public Input

Ms. Katherine Boyd, via telephone conference call, introduced herself and stated she wished to discuss the wait list. She had contacted the Coalition's local office, but they were not able to explain to her why the wait list was now closed and why services are being placed on hold. Mr. McHugh briefly explained the Coalition's deficit situation and with improvement, the hope of soon re-opening the wait list.

Ms. Boyd explained she is a student at USF, but the Coalition would not approve her for services as she did not have a signed enrollment form. She inquired about obtaining a temporary extension based on what was submitted in order to keep her enrolled in the program. Ms. Kier explained that the Coalition must follow the guidelines and rules set in place by OEL. She would look into her case personally and respond to Ms. Boyd.

Mr. Guadagnino inquired if having input by phone conference was part of a new policy. Mr. Farrelly responded that citizens may call in to a public meeting just as Board members. Ms. Boyd had submitted a public comment form, as per policy.

VIII. Adjournment

Mr. McHugh adjourned this meeting of the Coalition's Board of Directors at 9:42 a.m. without further discussion.

Respectfully submitted by:

Ramute "Jak" Jakubauskas
Administrative Assistant I

Oct. 18, 2017

TO: PHELC board members
FROM: Jeff Webb
RE: Minutes of April 27, 2017 board meeting

Good morning, ladies and gentlemen:

I thank you for your time and your attention, and I request your patience as I attempt to do something I have never had to do before — defend my honor and my reputation.

In a few minutes your chairman will ask you to approve the minutes of the the April 27, 2017 board meeting. But before you do, I wish to shed some light on the narrative that has been presented in your agenda packet.

I have been forced into this circumstance because of your executive director's personal attack on me, a private citizen whose only so-called "sinister" action — his word, not mine — was to request a few public records and attend a few public meetings.

For exercising my right to learn more about how this organization was working, I was labeled a troublemaker and was targeted by him in a dramatic attempt to assassinate my character. It included name-calling and wild speculation about my motives and my character.

Your executive director alleged that I intended to "bring down" this organization. The minutes before you today inaccurately state that as if it were fact. ... That was not true when he said it, and I assured this board on April 27 that was not my intention. In fact, I stated my support for your mission and your employees.

More egregious in your executive director's ambush on my character on April 27, is that he accused me of a crime. He alleged — and members of this board blindly accepted and echoed his malicious insinuations — that his life had been threatened. Again, I flatly denied that. Yet, in the minutes

before you there are several references to such “threats” as if they are facts.

I state again, as I clearly did April 27: I have never threatened physical violence against your executive director or anyone else in this organization. For him or anyone else here to allege, or even insinuate that, is a lie. In fact, I’m a pacifist. I do not own a firearm and I have not fired one since I was honorably discharged from the military more than 40 years ago.

Your executive director, even though he is a lame-duck now, has placed the members of this board in a precarious position: ... His actions are your actions. They cannot be separated.

His presentation on April 27, 2017 was planned and had the intent of defaming me. It demonstrated a reckless disregard for the truth, and thus, actual malice. I suspect some members of this board, past and present, were aware of his intention. They are complicit in his misconduct.

I absolutely despise being put in the position of defending my reputation. ...

I say this with humility, but I also say it with pride — I have served my profession, my community, my family — and my country — with purpose and honor.

So, I hope you will understand why I will allow not that lifetime of honest, upstanding citizenship to be discarded like a scrap by the paranoid overreactions, insecurities and mean-spirited rant of a man who doesn’t even know me.

In conclusion, here is my request of the board:

Append the minutes of the April 27 meeting to include the comments I have made today, as well as a copy of the July 19 letter my attorney sent board members, which clearly elucidated my position on this matter.

These minutes before you are archival history and it will be in worldwide view of the public forever. It is essential that my full response be reflected verbatim for the record.

Given that I, as a private citizen who does not have the resources you do to globally disseminate this information, I think your approval of my request to append these minutes would be not only reasonable and fair, but would show good faith that just might help heal this unpleasant discourse as your new ED assumes leadership of this organization.

I thank you for your time. And I wish you all inspiration and reason as you carry out your responsibilities on this board.

Sincerely,
Jeff Webb

VPK Diamonds

GOAL

The goal of a VPK QRIS is to create a system whereby providers can improve quality within their VPK programs.

PURPOSE

-  A Quality Rating Improvement System designed specifically for VPK Providers.
-  A stand-alone rating that can be in addition to the Sunshine Stars Rating System
-  Quality Rating Improvement System available for a wider constituency of providers
-  Provides parents more information on choosing a high quality VPK program
-  Generates economic competition to improve quality among VPK providers

GUIDELINES

-  VPK Diamond program is a voluntary QRIS program
-  Quality Standards assessed are the same as the Sunshine Stars system (Learning Environment, Staff Credentials and Professional Development, Teacher-Child Interactions) with one additional standard (Child/Program Assessment Data)
-  Staff Credentials and Professional Development will be updated to reflect minimum VPK staff requirements and reward those programs whose teachers are more highly trained.
-  Provider Specialists will be doing the evaluations, assessment data to be collected from the STAR Early Literacy test
-  Centers and FCCH ratings are good for two years
-  Star ratings will be posted on the Coalition web-site and provided to parents at VPK registration kiosks.

QUALITY CHARACTERISTICS

-  Provides a comprehensive program that includes a safe, clean environment where a child's emotional and social well-being is being nurtured
-  Directors are mentoring their staff and are aware of the quality of classroom interactions
-  Qualified teachers and assistants are continually seeking new and innovative ways to engage and teach their students
-  Classrooms are child-friendly and set up to allow and encourage freedom of exploration
-  A strong knowledge of curriculum is evident and proper implementation is evident
-  Qualified teachers have planned out lessons to fulfill expected standards and that fit the needs of the individual child. Age appropriate materials for hands on learning opportunities are utilized
-  Qualified teachers and assistants build meaningful relationships with children and understand the impact their interactions make on a child's life
-  Qualified teachers and assistants interact with students in order to support each child's individual emotional needs
-  Qualified teachers and assistants are proactive and prepared for each day; providing students with thoughtful activities so that no learning time is wasted
-  Qualified teachers and assistants promote autonomy and encourage each child to be the best that he or she can be in order to be successful in Kindergarten and beyond

TIME LINE

-  Development and provider input currently in progress.
-  Program roll-out in January 2018 with the release of STAR Early Literacy assessment data.