



**BOARD OF DIRECTORS
MEETING MINUTES
April 19, 2010**

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

Day/Date/Time: Monday, April 19, 2010 – 1 p.m.

Location: Pasco-Hernando Community College
Brooksville Campus
11415 Ponce De Leon Blvd.
Brooksville, FL 34601

Board of Director Members Present: Lisa Hammond, Chair; Susan Arnett, Sister Roberta Bailey, Elizabeth Callaghan, Jo Ann Carman, Bonnie Clark, Jayne Goldstein, Sonya Jackson, Dr. Steve Kanakis, David Lambert, Karen Livengood, Joe Mascaro, Dave Meglay, Nicole Miller, Beth Rawls, Mary Beth Wehnes

Board of Director Members Excused: Debi Martoccio, Pat Mulieri, Teresa Suarez

Board of Director Members Absent: None

Coalition Staff Present: Kim Borrego, Pattie Eacobacci, Jim Farrelly, Nicole Gonzalez, Ramute “Jak” Jakubauskas, Betsy Kier, Bill Kleinsorge, Debbie Thomas

Guests Present: Keri Alleva, YMCA; Lisamarie Alvarado, PHCC; Mary Balogh, Student; Eric Bane, Student; Marcie Bauer, Guardian Ad Litem; Alan Berger, YMCA; Beverly Berger, YMCA; Brandon Berros, PHCC; Charlene Bigelow, Grandparent; Linna B. Blevins, CDA Council; Joel Blount, SGA; Dawn Bloxsom, PHCC; Amanda Boltin, PHCC; Zachary Boyce, PHCC; Tammy Brinker, YMCA; Nancy Candy, Student; Dr. Anthony Carboni, Saint Leo University; Cirina Castillo; Shalena Castillo; Christie Cavallaro, PHCC; Lala Cintron, Saint Leo; Cassandra Clayton, Happy Land; Joanie Collins, YMCA; James Cook, CGI; Joseph Cook; Rina Crist, Student; Raquel Cruz; Dr. Kathleen De Sousa, PHCC; Paulina Decker; Crystal Derry, Parent; Lissette Diaz, Salvation Army; Peg Donovan, Guardian Ad Litem; Loreida Eldridge, Hernando County Schools; Skye M. Estrada, PHCC; Angela Field, PHCC; Maud Ford, Little Peoples; Kervenya Fortune; PHCC; Tery Fronknecht, Student; Dr. Stanley Giannet, Provost, PHCC; Mary Grey, Pasco County School Board (PLACE); Maria Hall, YMCA; Susan Hampton, YMCA; Dr. Mary Harper, St. Petersburg College; Gloria Harris,

Learning Tree Preschool; Shane Harris, Learning Tree Preschool; Heather Hart, La Petite; Tiffany Haynes, YMCA; Jan Heaton, YMCA; Angela E. Hing; YMCA; Sharon L. Hoffman, YMCA; Tylor Hubbard, PHCC; Gerry Hudson, Little Peoples; Mary Hudson, Little Peoples; Jomesha Iles, YMCA Parent, PHCC; Lisa Ismaglio, Saint Leo; Kellee Ivey, YMCA; Rhonda Jewell, YMCA; Donna Kale, La Petite; Anthony Kaspais, PHCC; Cindy Koepke, PHCC; Jennifer Kralling, PHCC; Kristina Kreitzer; Jennifer Kriner, PHCC; Cynthia Rendeiro-Lontrao, Pasco Schools PLACE; Vania Lopez, Saint Leo; Jackie Maness, Longleaf Learning Center; Jaclyn Manning, Student; Tony Marrero, St. Petersburg Times; Samantha Mattick, PHCC; Paul McCain, Student; Dr. James McHale, University of South Florida; Tiffany McKeath, PHCC; Meriem McLaughlin, PHCC; Billie Moreland, PHCC; Laurie Mykel, ABC Academy; Kevin Nissen, Little People's Preschool; Missy Nurrenbrock, Genesis School; Nerrisa Ortiz, YMCA; Karen Ostrander, Parent; Jaime Pacat, PHCC; Cindy Perretti, YMCA; Valerie Ploethner, Parent; Tinika Rachel; Jean Rags, Hernando County; Heidi Rand, MFCS Head Start; Dana Rifino, YMCA; Barrett Rivera, Saint Leo; Merida Robinson, Ellie's Day Care; Therese Romulus, YMCA; Sandy Roth, Guardian Ad Litem; Timothy Rushins, PHCC; Helen Sawyer, Ms. Helen's Preschool; Jeff Schneider; Kristal Serame, Student; Angela Conner Shaftic, Polkadots Preschool; Adam Sirico, PHCC; Ashley Somers, PHCC; Lachelle, Saint Leo; Bonnie Townsend, YMCA Parent; Janna Wagner, PHCC; Lanto Wagner; Luella Ward, First Class; Skip Ward, First Class; Brenna Warshonsky, PHCC; Toni Watkins, Sacred Heart ECC; Becca Webster, PHCC; Stephen Weston, PHCC; Sally Wilson, Grandparent; Megan Wright, PHCC; Timothy Wright, PHCC; Susan Wysong; Karen M. Zavrel, Little Leprechauns; Frank Zita, PHCC

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

Ms. Lisa Hammond, Chair, called the special meeting of the Early Learning Coalition of Pasco and Hernando Counties, Inc. Board of Directors to order at approximately 1:05 p.m.

II. Action Items

• **Adoption of Agenda**

Ms. Hammond requested a motion to adopt the agenda. Mr. Meglay moved to accept this motion and Mr. Lambert seconded. All were in favor with no abstentions and the motion carried. (**Action Item #0910-41**)

III. Historical Perspective, Age Range for School Readiness Services – Mr. Jim Farrelly, Executive Director

Mr. Farrelly thanked the Coalition's Board members, Dr. Kathleen De Sousa, the panel of experts and all those interested in the welfare of young children in this community for attending today's meeting. He stated the Florida legislature enacted the School Readiness Act, also known as Statute 411, in 1999. Statute 411 stated that Florida counties should be providing early education and in 2000 the Hernando and Pasco School Readiness coalitions were formed. In 2005, a collaboration of the two (2)

coalitions was formed to create the Early Learning Coalition of Pasco and Hernando Counties, Inc. to provide services to children from birth-12. He stated there are thirty-one (31) Early Learning Coalitions throughout Florida. Of these Coalitions, eighteen (18) no longer serve children birth-12. Only thirteen (13) serve children birth-12. Of those thirteen (13), this Coalition and one (1) other are studying the issue of age range change. The reason for this study is not just based on dollars, but the mission of the Early Learning Coalition (To prepare children to enter and succeed in school.)

He stated that this Coalition's \$12.5 million School Readiness budget had been supplemented by over \$2 million in ARRA funds for FY 09/10 and still, over a ten (10) week period, had a waiting list of 600 children, 75% of whom were aged birth-5. He stated that for FY 10/11 the Coalition's best hope would be to be "held harmless" with the same budget dollars as the previous year. The Coalition's projected wait list for FY 10/11 is 2,000 children, 75% of them would be birth-5.

Mr. Farrelly informed the Board there are two (2) possible options. The first would be to continue what we are doing and accept a wait list of over 2,000 children. Another option would be to consider a change in the age range.

Mr. Farrelly stated that currently 407 children, ages 9-12 are being served by 120 providers with two (2) providers serving more than ten (10) children. 78% of providers serve fewer than five (5) children in this age range. 596 children, ages 6-8, are being served with eight (8) providers serving more than ten (10) and 67% of providers serve fewer than ten (10) children.

He stated that state-wide, the wait list for School Readiness exceeds 84,000 children with 6,325 children on Hillsborough's wait list, 3,500 in Pinellas County and 1,400 in Polk County.

Mr. Farrelly stated that since January, he has been informing the Board of this emerging issue. He believes the next logical step would be to hear from this panel of experts who study children and their brain development.

At this time, Mr. Farrelly introduced Dr. De Sousa who introduced Dr. Stanley Giannet, Provost of Pasco-Hernando Community College. Dr. De Sousa then introduced each of the panelists prior to their individual presentations.

IV. Academic Panel Presentation: Early Brain Development in Children

The following individuals presented on Early Brain Development in Children:

- Dr. Anthony Carboni of the Psychology Department of Saint Leo University – provided an overview of current research in early brain development and discussed academic success in early learning.
- Dr. Mary Harper, College of Education, St. Petersburg College – provided input on the role early learning providers play on impacting brain development and social and emotional competence and school readiness.

- Dr. James McHale, College of Arts & Sciences, University of South Florida – provided input on the importance of communication and coordination between parents of infants and children and coordination between families and providers.

V. **BREAK**

At this time, Ms. Hammond suggested the Board and guests break for a period of ten (10) minutes.

VI. **Public Input**

Ms. Hammond reconvened the meeting of the Early Learning Coalition of Pasco and Hernando Counties, Inc. Board of Directors meeting at 2:55 p.m. Public comments will now be accepted on the Age Range discussion. Ms. Hammond stated that any questions for the panelists will be noted and consolidated for the panelists' response after Public Input.

Jennifer Kriner – she is a mother of three (3) young children who receives assistance from the Coalition. If the age is to be reduced, she will not be able to work. She asked it be reduced to ten (10) not six (6) or eight (8).

Linna Blevins – thanked the speakers and stated they were “speaking to the choir.” She asked how many credentialed, early childhood educators were in the room. She stated that children aged 7-10 need a group setting for consistency and continued critical development. Florida has no age requirement law for unsupervised children being left home alone. We owe it to young children to provide services by cutting Coalition staff and reducing salaries.

Gerry Hudson – with Little Peoples Christian Daycare - serves thirty-two (32) children in his childcare facility and spoke to losing dollars and staff layoffs. He provided a cost breakdown for the Board (attached).

Jomesha Iles – stated she is a single mother of four (4) and utilizes the services of the YMCA because she does not have family to help care for her children. She is worried about pedophiles.

Maud Ford – asked the Coalition not to cut the age range because other counties are cutting services, first priority should be the children. It would place more children on the streets within reach of drugs and sex perverts. She asked if there were other avenues for parents for assistance and recommends better accountability from those parents needing care, eliminating parental abuse of services.

Tammy Brinker – Executive Director of the YMCA School Age Programs stated they have fifteen (15) licensed programs in both Pasco and Hernando County. In Hernando County, 229 children are receiving services with seventy-one (71) children between the ages 9-12. She stated the YMCA also assists approximately 200 children with financial

assistance. She asked what choices parents would have and if the Board has put a plan in place for school-aged children before a decision is made.

Rhonda Jewell – with the YMCA, read a letter from a parent.

Sharon Hoffman – with the YMCA, read a letter from a parent. She stated that parents are trying to better themselves by working and going to school. She suggested looking at the kids and not the money and finding a way to make it work for them so they are not left at home alone.

Toni Watkins – with Sacred Heart Early Childhood Center, stated that research shows leaving children in before and after school programs promotes higher grades and graduation from high school, closes minority achievement gaps, ensures public safety and improved attendance in school. She requested the Board have a plan in place.

Laurie Mykel – with ABC Academy, has concerns that 9-10 year olds will be left at home alone. She requested that school-age programs be maintained and stated that the summer programs are especially important as they teach children skills on how to be home alone.

Susan Wysong – stated she is a grandmother and suggested having the County dip into reserve funds.

Keri Alleva – with the YMCA, read a letter from a parent. As a single parent, she is also concerned about children having to wait at bus stops alone.

Dana Rifino – with the YMCA, read a letter from a parent. She is also the parent of four (4) children and is concerned about safety issues.

Kevin Nissen – former director of Little Peoples Preschool believes that sending school-aged children home without supervision would be disastrous and negligent. He stated that waiting lists get cleared up. He stated that 5-year olds should not be going home by themselves when there are 1,109 sexual predators in the area.

Tiffany Haynes – with the YMCA, read a letter from a parent. She asked that the Coalition not take funds from the before and after school programs as they are important to children and their parents.

Therese Romulus – with the YMCA, stated that physical development is a key role of the YMCA's programs and what will the children do without it – watch TV or play video games? PE classes are no longer offered in schools, but the YMCA provides outdoor activities.

Missy Nurrenbrock – believes the Coalition is moving too quickly as it has had waiting lists in the past. Serving children aged 0-12 is not new. She stated that twenty-seven (27) of the thirty-one (31) Coalitions are serving children 0-8, 9, 10, 11 or 12. Children and providers will be affected and she suggests getting all the facts to make a good decision.

Kellee Ivey – with the YMCA, read a letter from a parent who asked why \$100 million can be sent to Haiti, but there are no funds for our children. She also stated that as a parent of a 10-year old, she knows they are not mature enough to be left at home alone.

Gloria Harris – spoke to the wait list and stated that her center had lost children due to problems with paperwork. She stated that older children are still learning and need after school programs. She believes the Board has already made a decision to make cuts. As a business person, she stated if she loses children, her funds will be cut and she would have to layoff two (2) teachers. She asked that if changes will be made that children currently in the program be allowed to remain until they reach the age of twelve (12).

Shane Harris – he inquired when the age changes will be made, how will they be transitioned? Has a plan been developed? Has AWI approved this implementation? He stated that providers were not asked as a group for their input. He stated some of his parents contacted Senator Fasano's office and were told to contact Coalition Board members. He asked how many of the Board members had been contacted. He stated the Coalition is hiring staff every other week and asked where this money is coming from. He asked if the Board would be willing to give providers one (1) hour to give their input.

Jean Rags – stated she had served on the Coalition Board for ten (10) years. She stated this is a passionate issue for Board members and providers. She stated Board members are community volunteers who have had to tackle difficult and challenging issues. Everyone has to do more with less including county government and community citizens. She stated she has not heard anyone say they have been to Tallahassee to lobby for additional funds. She stated services for birth-5 is mandated and the mission of the Coalition. She recommends considering a plan that will lower the age range to eight (8) and transition through age twelve (12) by the end of the year with input from providers.

Bonnie Townsend – with the YMCA, read a letter from a parent and requested that the Coalition keep all children through the age of twelve (12).

James Cook – stated he was a businessman who has served on boards. He stated that a balanced budget was necessary to do business and necessary for the Coalition. He stated there are not enough funds available to serve all children and that the Coalition has been working on creating a Foundation to raise funds. He does not believe that 3-year olds should be on a waiting list for services.

Public Input was closed at 3:40 p.m.

VII. Board and Panel Discussion, Age Range for School Readiness Services

At this time, Ms. Hammond posed a question to Dr. Carboni from an audience member on whether windows of development are open after the age of five (5).

Ms. Hammond replied to comments/questions raised by audience members as follow:

- Regarding eligibility - Ms. Hammond stated parents are re-determined every three (3) months and occasionally they may no longer qualify for assistance because of a change in job status or other circumstances.
- Coalition expenses – Ms. Hammond stated that the Coalition’s administrative expense is 3.7% and the State does not allow this amount to exceed 5% of the total budget.
- A plan for transition will come out of these discussions.
- There are no county reserves for funding; this is not a county funded organization. The Coalition’s funds come from the State or from donations. The Coalition’s Foundation is waiting to receive its 501(c)(3) designation before actual fundraising can begin. The amount of funds the Coalition receives from local government is relatively small, between \$5-10,000 annually.
- This change is not a directive from AWI, but the Board is pursuing it to determine where the Coalition should make the largest investment and where the greatest impact on a child’s life will be.

The following is from discussion and input from the Coalition’s Board members:

Ms. Miller stated there seems to be a presumption that this Board has made a decision. She stated no decisions have been made and that as a member of the Executive Committee, she has learned that other Coalitions have been discussing age range since 2008. She stated the Board is currently looking at all the information before making any decision.

Mr. Meglay stated he appreciates everything he has heard, but the Coalition must consider its mission – to prepare children to enter and succeed in school. He believes that toddlers are losing opportunities that are now being offered to 12-year olds.

Ms. Arnett stated she would like to comment on recent newspaper articles regarding pedophiles and what happens to children left home alone. The unfortunate reality is that 95% of the victims know the perpetrator. She believes that for every safeguard put in place, a way will be found around it.

Ms. Callaghan stated the bottom line is that the Coalition only has a certain amount of funding and has to look at its mission. Because there is only a certain amount of funds, not every child can be served. As an employee of the Health Department, she knows that not every family will receive health services. She stated there needs to be a transition and that perhaps children currently receiving services could continue to do so, but new children being enrolled would be affected.

Mr. Meglay spoke of personally adopting a child when she was 9-months old. This child had been tied by her ankles in a crib and to this day she shows no emotion and cannot express herself. He has seen firsthand what can happen when the smallest children are neglected. He agrees there should be a transition period and believes that services should be available through age eight (8).

Ms. Arnett stated that in former Board discussions, members have struggled on whether the Coalition could be all things to all people or narrow their focus to excel in its services to a smaller group. She believes that other community resources are available for older children. She does not believe there will be a “perfect model” but we will do the best we can with the resources we have available. She stated she has a great deal of respect for child care providers, but those that are relying heavily on government funds are always traumatized because government funding does go away at some point. She agrees that if there is a change, the Coalition should make that transition as smooth as possible. She suggested the Coalition work with centers on helping create a new business model as they may have to do business in a different way.

Sister Roberta stated the muttering in the audience is very disturbing saying that the members’ minds are already made up. She realizes these decisions are hard to make but the Board members are people of good will. She stated, as a one of the non-voting Board members, the Board would not have invested this much energy and time if a decision was already made. She would not participate if she thought that was the situation.

Dr. Kanakis stated this is a lot to absorb, but it is a good discussion. He also believes that more time should be allotted to the discussion as well as having a transition plan in place to make sure the least amount of people are impacted.

Ms. Miller stated she realizes this topic is being discussed in different counties, but she needs to know more about a plan before a decision can be made. She is uncomfortable with the age piece because the other Coalition’s have indicated several tiers in their age range decision.

Mr. Meglay stated that thought will have to be given to an implementation procedure and the Coalition will have to focus on what it is going to do. Even though a decision will have to be made, he inquired how every possible contingency could be built into it. He agrees that children should not just be cut off from services, but the decision could be that no new 12-year olds would be accepted. The children in the system now will not be thrown out and parents and providers will be given time to transition into the change.

Ms. Hammond stated if the Board is not comfortable making a decision today, she would like to know what additional information the Board would require to make a recommendation for an age to focus on. The details would then be worked out by staff and brought back to the Board for approval or modification. Ms. Hammond stated that any information needed by the Board would be forwarded so that a decision can be made.

Ms. Wehnes replied she needs to know how the plan would be implemented, if the decision is made to cut off at a certain age, will we begin now and what will we do with the children in care. She understands the statistics, but what is the plan and how will it be implemented.

Ms. Hammond stated the implementation will be driven by the age range.

Ms. Wehnes inquired how will the Coalition make this transition for the providers and the children. The reason she does not feel comfortable making a decision is that she did not hear all of this before today and as a parent of an 8-year old, she does not feel comfortable making a decision at this point. She asked what will the Coalition do, if our plan is to go with age eight (8), what will happen next. Are we going to keep the children currently enrolled and then start removing children from the waiting list and not accept anyone over the age of eight (8)?

Ms. Rawls inquired if the Board first needed to make a decision on whether a change will be made and then decide what the change will be. Shouldn't a decision on whether to make a change at all first be put to a vote? And then, follow that vote with discussions on changes and details and then vote on those changes.

Ms. Hammond stated that many members of the Board are not comfortable taking a vote unless the details are already hammered out.

Ms. Arnett stated she needed to process what she learned today.

Ms. Hammond thanked everyone for their attendance.

VIII. Adjournment

Ms. Hammond requested a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Lambert so moved. The April 19, 2010 Board meeting of the Early Learning Coalition of Pasco and Hernando Counties, Inc. was adjourned at 4:05 p.m. with no further discussion.

Respectfully Submitted by:

Ramute "Jak" Jakubauskas
Administrative Assistant