

# Board of Directors Minutes - 02/15/07



Early Learning Coalition of Miami-Dade/Monroe  
Board of Directors Meeting – Minutes of February 15, 2007 at 8:00AM

**BOARD ATTENDANCE:** O. Verdeja Jr. (Chair), Y. Johnson (Vice Chair), C. Chapell, A. Eckstein, P. Johnson, M. Hill, J. Russell, S. La Villa, G. Schwartz, N. Seijas, A. Weller, D. Lawrence, J. Robinson, M. Bryant, W. Harvey (Board Attorney), Y. Perkins (via phone), D. Armstrong (via phone), R. Beasley (via phone)

**STAFF ATTENDANCE:** E.Torres, J. Armbrister, P. von Fuchs, M. Manrara, L. Barreiros, B. Carrick, A. Soto, W. Salter, D. Chang, R. Philippe, K. Allen

**GENERAL ATTENDANCE:** S. Goff, E. Humes-Newbold, C. Campbell, V. Lopez, N. Thompson, G. Ross, M. Binelo, M. Woodson, D. Manning, E. Rivera, D. Blumberg, L. Carmona-Sanchez, J. Leinfelder, M. Dashteli, D. Greenfield, R. Signori, Y. Rodriguez, M. Rodriquez, P. Erwin, M. Esteban, P. Saunders, B. Ritchie, A. Haskin, L. Russell, R. Blay, E. Diaz, L. Porter, S. Balgobin, B. George, P. Johnson, A. Fagundo, A. Sejeck, V. Gonza, G. Gregg, Y. Guerra, Y. Anido, M. Ramon, L. Weatherspoon, K. Massey, C. Hurtado, L. Orta, R. Barreal, K. Mitchell, T. Rutherford, W. Mendez, K. Suarez-Espinosa, J. Bonnet, D. Montadas, U. Iterian, N. Perez, A. Parjus, L. Secca, V. Fernandez, W. Amaya, O. Lidia, S. Marti, L. Sanchez

AGENDA ITEMS	DISCUSSION/CONCLUSION	RECOMMENDATION/ACTION
<b>WELCOME &amp; INTRODUCTIONS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Octavio Verdeja Jr., chair, called the meeting to order and welcomed everyone.</li> <li>▪ Pamela von Fuchs called roll and a quorum was established with eight (8) voting members.</li> </ul>	
<b>APPROVAL OF MINUTES</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• O. Verdeja called for the approval of the meeting minutes from 1/08/07</li> <li>• Motion is seconded by A. Eckstein with the amendment that his name be included in the board attendance</li> <li>• Motion unanimously passed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• D. Lawrence moved to approve the minutes of 1/08/07</li> <li>• Motion was seconded by A. Eckstein with the amendment that his name be included in the board attendance</li> <li>• Motion unanimously passed</li> </ul>
<b>RESOLUTIONS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ O. Verdeja stated that all of the resolutions have gone through committee and called for all of the resolutions to be approved together, one (1) through six (6).</li> <li>▪ Resolutions:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Resolution 021507-01: Contract with University of Miami for DEB Project</li> <li>○ Resolution 021507-02: Amendment of contract with Antonio Ojeda</li> <li>○ Resolution 021507-03: Approve rate increase for Miami-Dade county providers</li> <li>○ Resolution 021507-05: Approve the proposed quality initiatives for children being served by the School Readiness (SR) grant</li> <li>○ Resolution 021507-07: Approve closing the bank accounts at Wachovia Bank and transferring the balances to City National Bank</li> <li>○ Resolution 021507-08: Approve the award of \$250,000 to support The Children’s Trust award to the Children’s Forum for WAGES program</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	

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<p><b>Resolution 021507-03</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Alan Eckstein inquired about the rate increase being approved for Monroe county by Finance.             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➢ Evelio Torres replied that no, because the Finance meeting was prior to the meeting with Monroe county.</li> <li>➢ O. Verdeja explained that it will be approved at the next Finance meeting but at least the board can start looking at the possibility of moving a rate increase forward.</li> <li>➢ E. Torres explained that concerning Monroe county, the coalition needs authorization for two rate increases in the same fiscal year.</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ Yvonne Johnson asked if the dates on the resolution could be checked on the rate increase.</li> <li>▪ E. Torres responded that concerning Resolution 021507-03, it should be changed to: not to exceed \$3M for '07-'08 and \$500,000 for '06-'07 instead of '07-'08.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Resolution 021507-07</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ David Lawrence Jr. inquired about moving monies from Wachovia Bank to City National.             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➢ Maggie Manrara responded by stating that the operating account is at City National Bank. The funds segregated in Wachovia were funds the coalition referred to as old funds, reserves. The coalition needs to spend the funds and move them from the reserves account to the operating account, closing the Wachovia account.</li> <li>➢ E. Torres reiterated that these are the dollars that must be either used or returned to the state by April 30<sup>th</sup>. The exact amount is \$1.8M.</li> <li>➢ M. Manrara confirmed that the coalition is moving the account to fulfill state guidelines and with no funds left in the account, it must be closed...</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	
<p><b>Resolution 021507-01, -02, -03, -07, -08</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• D. Lawrence moved to approve Resolutions 021507-01, -02, -03, -07 and -08 with the exception of -05 dealing with surplus</li> <li>• Motion was seconded by G. Schwartz</li> <li>• Motion unanimously passed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• D. Lawrence moved to approve Resolutions 021507-01, -02, -03, -07 and -08 with the exception of -05 dealing with surplus</li> <li>• Motion was seconded by G. Schwartz</li> <li>• Motion unanimously passed</li> </ul>
<p><b>COMMITTEE REPORTS</b></p> <p><b>Litigation Committee</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ O. Verdeja stated that Family Central has withdrawn and will not be presenting to the board. The coalition will continue to work with them to settle all issues. He opened up the discussion to the two remaining proposals.             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➢ E. Torres commented that he thinks everyone agrees VPK should not be separated from SR. The proposals can be split 50-50 or 30-70 with each of the providers having both VPK and SR. The recommendation from staff is that if the coalition does decide to split in two different providers, that both providers have an equal amount of SR and VPK—a geographic split.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	



- Natacha Seijas advocated strongly that she did not believe in splitting and that it had not worked before. The decision of whether to split or not should be put on the table.
- O. Verdeja concurred and indicated the next question would be—is it better to split geographically or programmatically?
- D. Lawrence reiterated that staff believes that splitting programmatically is an unwise path. In his ideal world, the program should be kept all together. Furthermore, he knows very little about Arbor. They had a somewhat up and down relationship in this community. CDS had a very tough state audit; it raised significant questions about their performance. His opinion would be to go with the County but that he thinks the County needs to speak specifically to what the audit says about performance measures.
- A. Eckstein stated that what he thinks is most important is to treat the children as the priority.
- Gerald Schwartz stated that he has always believed that what is best for the children is to have two providers. There is always some method of evaluating and comparing, keeping providers on their toes. He feels that two providers are in the best interest of the county. He went through the report and the coalition has to accept some of the blame because of its supervisory and oversight role. The coalition did not do a good job of that.
- Patricia Johnson concurred with G. Schwartz and believes in the two-provider system.
- Silvia La Villa stated she believes the coalition should have one provider. The coalition has raised the bar; it doesn't need competition to provide extra-raised standards.
- Y. Johnson said the two-provider system seemed like a duplication of administrative process. As a board, best practices should be sought and demanded that they are met.
- A. Eckstein concurred with G. Schwartz's comments. Two providers makes it competitive, however it's important to hear from the County.
- Jane Robinson commented that she thought the coalition should have one provider. She doesn't think the monitoring part had been as strong as it could have been.
- D. Lawrence said he is in favor of one organization for the reasons that Silvia La Villa mentioned. The board has been too disengaged over a significant period of time. He thinks it's being fixed now and is confident in the new management which was voted for unanimously.
- E. Torres stated he spoke to Chris Dugan with the ELC in Leon county to learn more about Arbor's performance. Although the numbers are relatively small because the counties are small, overall, there is a high level of satisfaction with Arbor in just about every area. The significant difference with that



	<p>particular coalition is that they serve as the central agency.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ E. Torres continued by saying he called, at Dr. Bryant's suggestion, the resource and referral number for the County. He received a recording but it wasn't very long. He spoke to someone at the 311 number and they gave him helpful information. Then he was transferred to CDS where he received the same helpful, informative service. When he called Pinellas county he ended up speaking with just one person and was not only given information on services available for children with special needs but was specific in the providers he could utilize. It is hard for him to answer whether it's better to work with one provider or two because he's never had the experience of working with two.</li> <li>➤ G. Schwartz informed the board he would go ahead and support one provider on the basis that it's a one-year contract. If the County is the provider and the board stays on top of them like glue and they don't start performing this coming year, then he will push for a different one.</li> <li>➤ Connie Chapell stated she thinks two providers is a duplication of services.</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Mae Bryant stated that the County, in a week, took over the other part of the county where the agency failed, spending \$5.5M of its own money. In the report, the biggest complaint was around resource and referral. The County, in December, tried to correct that effort and implemented a recording, the 311. The County does not have the staff to man the 7,300 calls they received in January on the hotline. The County determines eligibility for people, makes referrals to the parents so they can select providers and pay them. In the letter of February 5<sup>th</sup>, the County submitted a corrective action plan and that is when the County asked to be secret-shopped. For the findings in the audit report, the County also responded with a corrective action plan.</li> <li>▪ Gabriel Ross, CEO of Arbor, stated that in total, they actually serve more youth and child care providers than the program currently in Miami-Dade, and so the experience base is there. He appreciates Dr. Bryant's comments.</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• D. Lawrence moved to award both the School Readiness and VPK contracts to the Miami-Dade County CDS</li> <li>• Motion was seconded by J. Russell</li> <li>• Motion passed nine (9) to three (3)</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ O. Verdeja stated that this is a one-year contract [with Miami-Dade County] and the coalition is going to make sure they'll do their part and the County side will be expected to do their part. If things should change, next year everyone will be in the room again and perhaps making a different decision but he does congratulate those</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• D. Lawrence moved to award both the School Readiness and VPK contracts to the Miami-Dade County CDS</li> <li>• Motion was seconded by J. Russell</li> <li>• Motion passed nine (9) to three (3)</li> </ul>
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<p><b>Monroe Advisory Committee</b></p>	<p>at the County now.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Yesenia Perkins reported that the committee met on February 9<sup>th</sup> and went over the quality initiatives. The surplus on the Monroe side was approximately \$600,000. Several providers expressed approval of some of the initiatives: child care provider rate increase, mini-grants increasing the capacity and/or operating facilities. Of course there are restrictions on the use of the funds by the state. For instance, if any of the grants are to the Monroe providers, the restrictions are not for capital upgrades of their structure or their building. They are for improvements, remodeling, anything that is necessary to bring the facility up in compliance with the health and Safety Department pursuant to the state requirements. There were also other mini-grants for program improvements—to become accredited. Each mini-grant will start April 1<sup>st</sup>. The total of all the initiatives are approximately \$475,126. If the motion is going to be put forward, providers at least on the Monroe side gave their approval.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Finance Committee</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ M. Manrara explained that the primary source of revenue for the coalition is the SR grant. This is 73% of the total budget for the coalition; it is about \$121M. As of December 31<sup>st</sup> costs were analyzed and it became apparent that there were some expenditures lagging behind the projected expenditures level. The primary reason causing the biggest surplus is that the coalition has not been serving the number of students that it had projected. As of December, the coalition served 26,755 students and the goal was to serve 29,000. Also, in serving more school-age children, it is a lot less costly than serving infants. School-age children made up 33% of the total population of students that the coalition served but is only 25% of the cost. So the coalition might be serving more students but less of an expense therefore resulting in a projected surplus.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Resolution 021507-05</b></p>	<p>A three-prong approach was developed because the grant is funded in three categories: non-direct costs (administrative costs), quality initiatives, and direct costs (for providers). The approach includes a rate increase, work with the central agencies on recruitment to serve more children, and provide quality initiatives to populations the coalition is serving. The quality initiatives are only proposed based on estimates of cost. If enrollment does continue to increase then the coalition will not be using all of the funds for them. The initiatives have been prioritized by safety and health issues and for compliance purposes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ E. Torres clarified that every single child on what everyone refers to as a wait list (families who have registered through the website or have gone to the County to set up an appointment), are being served if they qualify for the services.</li> <li>➤ D. Lawrence inquired about the consequences, if any, of the state saying the</li> </ul>	



coalition should serve 29,000-plus but the coalition is only serving 26,000. Also, he asked by setting things in motion (rate increase and quality initiatives), will [the board] have to come back at some point and say they can't do it anymore?

- E. Torres responded that the quality initiatives are a one-time expense and do not require ongoing funding. The coalition is going to providers and getting feedback from them to ensure the money is being spent where it really needs it; the coalition has a number of proposals. Re: funding slots, the coalition needs to look at the numbers on a regular weekly basis. As with any other funded service, at some point the decision needs to be made to stop. What makes that difficult is, as Maggie indicated, the coalition does not spend the exact number of dollars for every type of child it serves.
- D. Lawrence reiterated that as the board, they wanted to come closer to what is perceived to be the state guideline of serving more prenatal to age five (5) children, and less of a percentage of six (6) and up.
- E. Torres said there were 1,400 school-age children on the wait list.
- M. Manrara clarified that the state does not prescribe how many children to serve but that the resources spent for direct services to the children are at 70%.
- E. Torres stated that the AWI/Office of Early Learning, as they are required to do by law, has proposed a new funding formula which reallocates the dollars, as is done every year, statewide, based on certain criteria that no one in the state in the field of early learning really understands up to this point. Many communities in the state, including Miami-Dade county, are going to lose dollars. Miami-Dade and Monroe will lose \$8M next year if the funding formula is approved. Broward county gains \$4M; Palm Beach loses \$500,000. One of the dangers of the coalition's continued open enrollment—that while using up as much of the surplus as possible in serving the kids that now have appointments, there is the danger that if \$8M is lost or even \$5M, there's going to be a very tough situation. So the coalition may have to enter the next fiscal year with a hard freeze and not continue to enroll kids because the situation may dictate that.
- D. Lawrence asserted that the challenge is that AWI came up with a complex formula and when looking at the paper, there is no one in the room who could possibly understand it; it is exquisite in detail. Miami-Dade and Monroe take a significant hit.
- E. Torres stated that the market study has been done in Monroe county and...two rate increases in one year, that is one of the big questions on the table right now. The April 30<sup>th</sup> funds are separate from the projected surplus. The funds that the coalition has been advised by the state that must be utilized before April 30<sup>th</sup> was



part of the fees and some of the start-up dollars that the coalition had been carrying for all of these years. When the coalition merged with Monroe to make the Miami-Dade coalition, both funds were combined. The total is about \$1.8M. Right now the directive from the state is to return or use the dollars by April 30<sup>th</sup>.

- A. Eckstein stated that the rate increase could be passed today with the proviso that it has to be approved that Monroe county can have two rate increases within the same fiscal year.
  - Walter Harvey stated that the original motion was crafted so that it would approve up to a certain amount, giving staff the discretion to have the funds disbursed in a manner that meets the amount set forth as the projected deficit. The Executive Committee could meet in a special session to ratify and approve the actions that were taken by staff to meet that projected deficit.
  - Jackye Russell asked for clarification that the rate increases were contained in Resolution 021507-03 which already passed.
  - Y. Johnson answered yes, for Miami-Dade.
  - J. Russell then inquired that also in Resolution 021507-03 was the suggestion to look at it for Monroe.
  - E. Torres and W. Harvey confirmed yes.
  - Y. Johnson reconfirmed that the motion as she understands it is to say that the board approves a rate increase for Monroe pending approval from the legislature.
  
- N. Seijas inquired about the outdoor play equipment for \$1.5M in Resolution 021507-05. Who is going to get the equipment and why is it being done when some providers don't even have a fax?
  - E. Torres responded that there were also other proposals to purchase 120 computers for providers to help with their curriculum and assessments. The grants to the providers will be limited to \$15,000 per provider.
  - N. Seijas replied that the cheapest playground equipment is \$22,000 to \$23,000.
  - E. Torres concurred and stated that that is why it is in draft. Ground cover is about \$25,000 and a tarp is another \$20,000. So it is very expensive.
  - N. Seijas stated that the monies she has as county commissioner allows for some small mini-grants but she finds that if the coalition is spending \$1.5M on equipment but not addressing the most important need the providers have which is how to get paid and how to send the appropriate paperwork...
  - E. Torres responded that all of the items that were placed on the list are from feedback received from providers. The playground equipment just happens to be a high-ticket item and something they are all asking for.
  - Connie Chapell stated that she thinks providers will have an opportunity to

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<p><b>Legislative Committee</b></p>	<p>answer these grants when they request the money. In Monroe county, every provider is contacted. They write what their needs are.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Y. Johnson stated that N. Seijas is correct in that these are not particularly hard numbers.</li> <li>➤ D. Lawrence emphasized that assuming the coalition goes down this path it is critical to have a transparent process that is widely known as being fair. He insisted on making it a huge priority.</li> <li>➤ E. Torres replied that the coalition is going to great lengths to make sure that the process is very transparent and inclusive of providers and everyone else to avoid that type of criticism. Also, because it is a large dollar amount there is a competitive procurement process. It is hard to spend \$5M even if the coalition funds additional slots. All of this ties into the quality rating system.</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Y. Johnson called for a motion to approve Resolution 021507-05.</li> <li>• D. Lawrence moved Resolution 021507-05 regarding proposed quality initiatives for children being served by the SR grant, plus approving the rate increase for Monroe county pending AWI approval</li> <li>• Motion was seconded by J. Russell</li> <li>• Motion passed unanimously</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Y. Johnson said that the board needs to come up with some legislative education-action initiatives to get the coalition's point of view across before legislature votes in March.             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ W. Harvey responded by saying that Sara Herald, before she went on a leave of absence, actually formed a committee and started to craft a legislative agenda for the board. That mission was incomplete. The agenda is used to educate board members and oftentimes bullet points are developed and so forth. The County does this in a variety of instances and he knows the commissioner [N. Seijas] is very familiar with that.</li> <li>➤ N. Seijas stated that she will put it on her legislative agenda through the County.</li> <li>➤ D. Lawrence said he does not want to be in charge of any more committees but would be willing, with Evelio, to take the lead with Marco Rubio, Ken Pruitt and others.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• D. Lawrence moved Resolution 021507-05 regarding proposed quality initiatives for children being served by the SR grant, plus approving the rate increase for Monroe county pending AWI approval</li> <li>• Motion was seconded by J. Russell</li> <li>• Motion passed unanimously</li> </ul>
<p><b>FLORIDA KINDERGARTEN READINESS SCREENER (FLKRS)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Shan Goff stated that she is from the other office of early learning at the Department of Education. They are the standards, the accountability and the professional development—the arm of Florida's early childhood program, specifically VPK. The biggest event that will happen in the VPK program statewide within the next two months is the calculation and release of the VPK readiness rates. From a</li> </ul>	



K-12 perspective, screenings have been done on all public school kindergarten children for many years. The same instruments have been used statewide for over five (5) years.

The directive received from VPK legislation was to select instruments aligned with VPK education standards through the state procurement process. The VPK readiness rate is calculated on the performance of the VPK graduates on the outcome assessment that is administered in kindergarten. There was consternation when the bill was written.

There is a subset of the Early Childhood Observational System that is administered by kindergarten teachers and covers all developmental domains: whether a child can follow directions, reading comprehension, and other specific behaviors that are clearly delineated and tracked directly back to the VPK standards. The other two measures are research based and show good predictors of future reading success or failure, and identify kids who need explicit intervention in emergent literacy and two important tasks: letter naming (seeing/saying letters within 60 seconds, uppercase and lowercase) and initial sound (discriminating initial beginning sounds and words in a one-minute probe—an important building block of pre-reading skills).

[Miami-] Dade made the largest gains in letter naming by percent from last year to this year of all the large districts, which is huge. Can this be attributed to VPK? Not yet, but there's a good start on that.

- D. Lawrence said that in terms of the work that has to be done, one-third (1/3) of all of the children are either moderate or high risk in this community.
- S. Goff responded that VPK moved in fast in '05 and '06; standard training wasn't completely rolled out, the emergent literacy supports to teacher. She thinks that in '07 to '08 the incredibly steep increases will be seen and the two lower groups of children will be paid special attention. Explicit instruction needs to be given—initial sounds are a bit more difficult. It really is auditory discrimination.
- S. Goff continued—there is no statutory requirement even though it is inferred that VPK language instruction be in English. In Miami-Dade along with many other communities, VPK is in Spanish. That is the parents' choice. The two DIBELS measures—the response is in English. K to 12 in public school is in English. Fifty percent (50%) of the 15,000 children across the state who are limited English-proficient because they have specific assessments done in public schools were at-risk in both languages. The focus must now be on quality instruction irrespective of the language.

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- It is the Department of Education’s statutory responsibility to calculate the VPK accountability index, which is the provider’s readiness rate. The process has to be transparent. From the Department’s perspective it is crucial that providers have the opportunity to look at the data before a high-stakes accountability index is calculated for them. AWI, along with the Early Learning Coalition are going to have to a short period of time to resolve the differences that affect the readiness rate. The DOE will work in concert with AWI and ELC and all of the coalitions. The process will take place around mid-April. Every provider’s readiness rate will be posted and searchable. It is a robust system so that the consumer, providers and the public have access to all information. There will also be an appeals process. The state will set a minimum rate as they are constrained by a statute that no more than 15% of the providers won’t meet that rate—roughly the lowest performing 600 providers across the state. Those providers have to do an improvement plan and if they do not meet the readiness rate for two (2) consecutive years, they are no longer allowed to be a VPK provider.
  - Linda Carmona-Sanchez suggested that in looking at the quality dollars, perhaps some incentives be considered for providers that have special needs children that need support services and don’t qualify for services through the public school system.
- Meeting adjourned at 10:38am.

Signed and approved by:

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S. Herald, Board Secretary

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Date