



Minutes

Program Policy & Strategy Committee Meeting
July 27, 2010; 3:30 p.m. – 5:30 p.m.
Early Learning Coalition of Miami-Dade/Monroe
Board Room
2555 Ponce De Leon Blvd Suite 500
Coral Gables, FL 33134

Committee Attendees: David Williams Jr.; Roderick Beasley; Jacqui Colyer; Modesto Abety; Elizabeth Bezos; Ramiro Moreno (via conference call); Lucy Piñeiro (via conference call)

Staff Attendees: Evelio Torres (CEO); Blythe Robinson; Jackye Russell; Tabatha Cullen; Yvette Medina; Mercy Castiglione; Melody Thelwell; Roseline Philippe; Natalia Delgado; Maritza Fuentes; Yasmin Wong; Milton Silvera; Kristina Alonso; Leana Pena; Mary Williams (via conference call)

General Attendees: Susan Tucker (YMCA); Brian Shaefer (YMCA); Edith Humes-Newbold (Miami-Dade County); Alan Eckstein (via conference call)

I. Welcome and Introductions	David Williams, Jr.
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- David Williams, Jr. welcomed the committee and attendees.
 - A quorum was established with four (4) voting members.

II. Approval of Agenda	David Williams, Jr.
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- David Williams, Jr. called for the approval of the agenda

III. Approval of April 27th, May 11th and June 1st Minutes	David Williams, Jr.
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- David Williams, Jr. called for the approval of the April 27th, May 11th and June 1st Minutes.
 - Jacqui Colyer requested that the April 27th minutes be corrected to include her attendance.
 - Modesto Abety requested that his absence from the May 11th meeting be excused.
 - Roderick Beasley moved to approve the minutes.
 - Jacqui Colyer seconded the motion.
 - Motion was unanimously passed.

IV. CEO Update	Evelio Torres, CEO
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- E. Torres discussed the school age percentages.
 - Currently, 29% of the children being served in School Readiness are school age. The goal the board had originally set was 25%. The last time the percentage reached 30% the decision was to lower the age limit for services to nine years of age. The question to pose to the committee and to the board is whether or not we still want to achieve the goal of 25% in



order to begin working with Wesley House and Miami-Dade County to bring that number back down. There are two options for reducing the current enrollment of school age children. The more practical option is to stop enrolling school age children, effective immediately, until the percentage drops through attrition. This may take several months to accomplish and a timeframe would be difficult to predict. We anticipate that this number will continue to increase unless it is managed, due to reductions in funding for other programs. The recommendation is that we stop enrolling school age children until we reach the 25% under the managed enrollment process the county has used in the past.

- R. Beasley asked for clarification as to why we are currently at 29% of school age enrollment if the goal is supposed to be 25%.
- E. Torres responded that the number of school age children began to increase around February. We need to make the decision to stop enrollment. It is the recommendation of the staff that we do not disenroll any children but that we do stop enrollment.
- A. Eckstein asked how we arrived at the decision of 25% in the first place.
- E. Torres responded that this resulted from a board discussion that took place about a year ago regarding the increased school age enrollment and how some control was needed over what percentage of the funding went to this age group.
- D. Williams, Jr. asked if the possibility exists that we could never reach the goal of 25%.
- E. Torres responded that we always lose children through the attrition. He stated that if we do not stop enrolling school age children now, this number can go up to 30 or 35%. The board needs to make a decision whether it will go down to 25% or stay at 29%. An issue that may come up if we stop enrolling school age children is that if there is a family that has more than one child, with one being younger than five and another in the school age category, they would only be able to have one in care and would not be able to fully address the family's needs.
- R. Moreno asked if the 25% in question represented 25% of the students or 25% of the budget to which E. Torres replied that it represented 25% of children enrolled in School Readiness.
- J. Russell further clarified that this represents 22.18% of the budget.
- J. Colyer asked if we took the nearly \$2 million that is currently being used for school age children, how many children could be taken off the waitlist.
- E. Torres stated that 625 children would be able to be taken off the list. E. Torres stated that a decision needed to be made in regards to what we are going to do with the current numbers. Are we going to leave it at the current amount, not put a cap on it and let it increase, or bring it down to a specified number?
- E. Bezos stated in order to make a decision like this she would need to know the actual number of children affected and what funding groups will be impacted. Will we only be funding BG-1 and TANF categories?
- E. Torres responded that this would affect only the BG-8 (income eligible) category.
- E. Bezos asked if this is the case, if we ever reach 25% using BG-1 and BG-3 categories which are mandatory categories how would we justify going over 25%. Unemployment rates are still rising and we will need to look at this fact when determining whether we will be able to hold true to 25%.
- E. Torres stated that we can never hold it to an exact number but the enrollment can be managed within a percent or two, above or under.
- E. Bezos asked if children would be disenrolled.



- E. Torres responded that the recommendation is to not disenroll any children as to not create a bigger disruption for the families. However, the challenge is that without disenrolling there is no telling when we would reach the target of 25%.
- M. Abety stated that he finds the distinction of children under or over five for the purposes of funding, somewhat arbitrary. There is a good deal of national best practice data that indicates that early learning includes the period through age 8. When looking at data concerning early childhood, 0-8 is what is being discussed. Goals related to preparing children and making them “school ready” extends through the third grade. If we can set policy that would be inclusive of this age group and merely say we will fund children up to eight years old, it would be much fairer to families.
- E. Humes-Newbold stated that in December of 1995, the board made some decisions about the ages being served, because at that time, the percentage of school age children was approximately 35% of the total population of children in care. Their goal was to come in line with what School Readiness was about, so the board made the decision to make the percentage 25%. At that time children 9 and older were disenrolled but this caused too many children to be removed from care. Later that year, children were brought back into the program. The increase in the percentage of school age children in care may be attributed to the recent increase in TANF. TANF has nearly doubled in the last 2 years.
- E. Torres stated that the board does not want to disenroll children. If a decision or recommendation is made, it is with the understanding that we will not know how long it will take to get back down to 25%. We have no control over some of these mandatory categories. The staff recommendation is that we, in accordance to the board’s previous decision, try to bring the number back down to 25% through attrition in the BG-8 category without disenrolling children.
- E. Bezos asked E. Torres to clarify his definition of attrition.
- E. Torres stated that attrition means children leaving the program either by aging out at age 9, moving out of the area, no longer qualifying due to income level, etc.
- E. Bezos asked if children 0-5 would continue to be enrolled.
- E. Torres stated that right now enrollment is closed because we are over the limit of 26,000 children. However, if the number drops below 26,000 we would begin enrolling younger children only until the 25% is reached,
- R. Beasley moved to accept the staff recommendation.
 - Jacqui Colyer seconded the motion.
 - M. Abety declined the motion.
 - Motion was passed by majority.
- E. Torres discussed the Strategic Planning Process.
 - The first meeting of the Strategic Planning Process will take place on September 7th during the board retreat.
 - The Executive Committee wants to make sure that we follow a process that allows us to obtain plenty of community feedback and take this information into account when making decisions that affect families and providers.
 - The facilitator of the Strategic Planning Committee will be selected on August 2nd.
- E. Bezos asked if voluntary auditing will be taking place at centers.
- E. Torres responded that an offer was made to providers to have a lawyer, banker and CPA review their books and get tips and business advice. There were no providers wanting to participate as of yet.



- E. Bezos requested that if anyone had volunteered, we should have a diverse group including family childcare centers, programs with children 0-9 and both for-profit and non-profit centers. This would ensure that each group is represented. E. Bezos added that she recommends that the Strategic Planning process remain open to the community to make sure they have the opportunity to discuss how these decisions have a realistic impact. E. Bezos also recommended that public comment take place after each agenda item, prior to a vote taking place.

V. TAPP Update

Jackye Russell

- E. Torres discussed the letter sent to Dr. Abrahante, and the follow-up letter sent to the Superintendent. The letters notified the Superintendent that as per the board's decision, we will no longer be able to accept funding for TAPP children that are not in accredited centers. What this means in terms of a financial impact is that essentially we are losing most of a 1.7 million dollar contract with the school system and we will have to lay off our infant and toddler specialist whose position is supported by this funding. There has been a lot of communication between the school system and their legal department and our board attorney in regards to whether a compromise could be reached so that they would make attempts to place children in accredited centers. We have not finalized that agreement but are hoping that before Monday, something is put in writing from the school system indicating that they would do so. There are 37 children left in the program that are yet to be placed in accredited centers.
- A. Eckstein asked if the typical problem coming up is that the parents do not want to move the children to centers out of their neighborhoods.
- E. Torres responded that one of the problems was that accreditation used to be required in the TAPP contract. The school system removed this requirement because too many parents were dropping out of high school because they were unable to obtain adequate accredited childcare in their areas,
- E. Bezos stated that she had understood that the school system responded by voting on using their early childhood centers in the high schools to serve those children. They would be administrating their own grant so what would end up happening is that in those neighborhoods the students would be bringing their children to their own public school provider.
- E. Torres stated that this was not the information given to us by the school system.
- E. Bezos asked how many children are enrolled in TAPP. J. Russell responded that typically it is about 260 during the school year but currently there are 37 children enrolled during summer school. These children are not included in school readiness numbers.

VI. Monitoring Report

**Carlos Garcia,
Goldstein Schechter Koch
Yvette Medina**

- Y. Medina discussed the details of the monitoring report and described the different funding categories.
- C. Garcia of Goldstein Schechter Koch explained the details of the sub-recipient programmatic services report. There are approximately 32 different components of compliance that are being looked at when completing an audit.



- D. Williams asked if the number of samples pulled is driven by anything in particular.
- C. Garcia responded that there is not a set percentage of samples pulled for each category, but they do work with the formula that AWI uses to calculate the number of samples pulled.
- E. Torres added that if there is a concern with one particular area, a larger sample will be pulled.
- M. Abety asked if files that are on the waitlist are part of the monitoring.
- E. Humes-Newbold responded that families on the waitlist will not have files to monitor as the file is not created until the eligibility process occurs.
- Y. Medina discussed the findings in the VPK eligibility portion of the report. The most prominent finding was incomplete parent registration forms.

VII. Child Enrichment Service Providers

Jackye Russell

- J. Russell, at the request of J. Colyer, presented the information detailing the cost of care for children ages birth to six. There are 2,709 children, age six, currently enrolled at an annual cost of \$596,684.34. The impact of serving only children until age six would be \$1,064,715.66 allowing an additional 3,304 children ages birth through six to be served.
- M. Abety asked if the words “before birth” could be removed from the mission since we are not providing any prenatal services. M. Abety suggested that when defining the options, that an option state that we fund services from birth to age five. And in relation to unregulated and enrichment services that we fund only those programs that we feel are meeting certain quality standards which the staff should define in terms of ratios, outcomes and curricula.
- J. Russell stated that Option B does allow service for children older than five.
- M. Abety added that for those programs that provide enrichment services, we want them to either be licensed or meet certain quality standards such as fingerprinting.
- J. Colyer added that faith-based organizations and camps are not required to undergo fingerprinting.
- E. Bezos stated that those programs which are not licensed but funded by the Children’s Trust do have to meet requirements that parallel the licensing requirements in order to receive funding. The spot-checking that takes place for School Readiness that looks at ratios can include fire inspections, background screenings etc. for enrichment providers and would not require any additional staff.
- M. Abety added that the goal is to protect children. He recommended that child enrichment providers either be licensed or meet the minimum criteria; among those health and safety standards. The concern is that there are no fingerprinting requirements.
- J. Russell clarified that School Readiness agreement does require a Level 2 background screening of anyone that enters into an agreement with the Early Learning Coalition.
- A. Eckstein stated that there are organizations in Monroe operating out of a park so they are unable to comply with licensing. They do, however, undergo background screenings.
- J. Colyer added that there is an emerging issue as it relates to the Department of Health. They are no longer inspecting childcare centers. The Department of Children and Families is working on a workaround in a September special session to talk about inspections of kitchen safety and healthy environments.



- A. Eckstein stated that for some of the programs in Monroe such as the Boys' and Girls' Club, Police Athletic League and YMCA, there is an educational component.
- E. Torres addressed the concern of some licensed providers who have expressed that as licensed providers they must incur the expense of licensing but the reimbursement rate is exactly the same.
- E. Bezos stated that she feels providers would be accepting of minimum standards for enrichment providers even if they do not get licensed, but are held to the same requirements. Also, YMCA and Boys' and Girls' clubs hold higher standards than minimum state standards.
- L. Piñeiro stated that while she understands we are addressing quality, we cannot underestimate the importance of statute 411, which addresses the intent of the Early Learning Coalition and the School Readiness Act. It is clear that our focus and intent was to serve children birth through kindergarten. L. Piñeiro stated that her understanding is that Miami-Dade is one of the few counties still serving school age children.
- E. Bezos stated that while she understands that the intent of statute 411 is to serve children zero to five, the statute does cover children zero to 17 with special needs. The funding comes from the Childcare Development Block Grant which is to keep parents at work. By giving these children a safe and educational environment we would be meeting the needs of the taxpayers that fund us.

VIII. New Business

David Williams, Jr.

- E. Bezos stated that provider representatives are now allowed to vote, however, the position held by Dr. La Villa is now vacant. This position must be held by a for-profit representative. She stated that there is a committee next week to look at this but this would take place after the board meeting. We would have had to be in compliance beginning in July.
- E. Torres stated that the position is vacant right now but there is no requirement that the position be filled. The only requirement is that the representative be a for-profit provider. There is a combined meeting of the bylaws and nominating committee on the 3rd of August that will review the process for selecting a board member. The position must be posted and advertised and then candidate interviews must take place before a final recommendation is made to the full board.
- E. Bezos recommended that there be a system by which there is communication between all provider representatives on the board and providers on a continuous basis. The Provider Services Committee does not meet very often so perhaps something like a blog where people could make recommendations and agenda items could be created.
- D. Williams recommended that E. Bezos go to the bylaws committee with these recommendations.
- E. Bezos asked if any opportunity for provider representatives to vote is foreseeable.
- E. Torres stated that only members of the board would have the opportunity to vote. He stated that he would move her recommendation to the nominating committee.
- J. Russell presented information regarding house bill 7069 which is the new background screening law which was recently enacted by the Department of Children and Families. There is a website that providers can visit to get information about who needs to be screened and where they can obtain background screenings.



VII. Adjourn

David Williams, Jr.

- D. Williams, Jr. adjourned the meeting.