



Approved on December 5, 2024, Program Review Committee Meeting

Early Learning Coalition of Broward County, Inc.

Program Review Committee Meeting Minutes

August 28, 2024, at 11:00 AM

Zoom Meeting

Members in Attendance	Chair, Monica King; Cindy Arenberg-Seltzer; Dawn Liberta; Melody McDonald; Renee Podolsky; Ellie Schrot
Members Absent	Laurie Sallarulo; Krystie Castillo; Richard Campillo
Staff in Attendance	Renee Jaffe, CEO; Christine Klima, CAO; Howard Bakalar, CPO; Hubert Cesar, CIO; Melody Martinez, Board Liaison; Amy Moore, Sr. Director of Family Services and Provider Relations; Allison Metsch, Sr. Director of Education & Quality; Ancel Pratt, III, Sr. Director of Communications & Outreach; Erica Accilon, Outreach Specialist Communications & Outreach
Others in Attendance	

Item	Action/Discussion
Welcome & Call to Order	Chair Monica King called the meeting to order at 3:01 PM. The roll was called, and a quorum was established.
Consent Agenda 1. Approve May 21, 2024, Committee meeting minutes	There was a Motion to move the Consent Agenda by Dawn Liberta and Seconded by Ellie Schrot. Unanimously approved. Motion Passes.
Regular Committee 1. PRC251RB1 - School Readiness Enrollment/Redetermination Update (Goal 1 of Strategic Plan)	<p>Amy Moore provided updates on School Readiness enrollment and redetermination. During FY 23/24 our team enrolled 4,277 children from the school readiness waitlist. ELC Broward is continuing to enroll families in School Readiness services at a steady pace. So far, for this FY we have selected 1,791 children from the waitlist, resulting in 408 children enrolled. As of August 23, there are 715 children on the waitlist. We are approaching a consistent census of between 15,500 and 16,000 children in care. Families are now experiencing approximately 2 weeks of wait time between applying for childcare subsidies and being notified to submit their documentation.</p> <p>While we did aim for a lower attrition rate last FY, we successfully stabilized the rate. Even though we did not meet the percentage that we were aiming for, we did, however, stabilize the rate and ended the year with a 27% attrition rate. However, the pace of new enrollments consistently overcomes attrition month to month. We did this by working with our communications department. They sent targeted emails to customers due for redetermination, and that helped stabilize what our percentage was. We fell below where we wanted to be, so to help with that this FY, we plan to work with the communication team to send out a communication to parents at 30,15, and 5-day intervals before families' redetermination deadline.</p>

Cindy Arenberg-Seltzer asked what the providers are saying anything when the children in their care don't successfully redetermine.

Amy Moore replied that we have not heard from the provider community or have any data on this. We do contact the provider if the parent is not responding to confirm we have the parents correct contact information.

Provider Rep Melody McDonald added that the families that don't redetermine are usually those that are school ages that go to aftercare or are moving away. She didn't have anyone that doesn't redetermine that continues care.

Cindy Arenberg-Seltzer added that the attrition chart is great, and she can see that everything is being done from the coalition's part. Maybe it would help to get that information from the providers, as Melody McDonald just provided, which shows that we don't have to worry about what happened to the families. Maybe the next level is the connection with the providers.

Amy Moore replied that we can partner with the providers, whether it's through the PLAN meetings or other communications. She also appreciated that Cindy recognizes that the Coalition is doing everything they can do. Additionally, we had a call with DEL that morning, and they commended us as a coalition for all the communication with do for our parents to redetermine because they also get notifications from DEL.

Howard Bakalar, CPO, added that we will make more efforts to do more focused groups formal and informal with our providers now that stimulus funds are gone, so we can see how everyone is recovering.

Amy Moore gave an update on enrollment. We are still awaiting final guidance on the new SR Plus program, and this aims to eliminate or soften the benefits cliff for families by allowing them to continue services up to 100% of the SMI, compared to the current threshold of 85%.

Enrollment from smaller programs, such as at-risk and other mandated categories remain steady. Our approach moving forward is to maintain a steady pace of new enrollments from the waitlist to balance attrition while avoiding aggression growth in our overall numbers. This strategy allows us to sustain our current level of service while remaining adaptable to any financial developments or changes in funding.

Cindy Arenberg-Seltzer asked if the SR Plus Program funding could be spread to other categories if it wasn't being utilized for its intended population.

Howard Bakalar replied that its new money coming in from the Workforce It is not being treated like the rest of SR funding. It is separated, and it is a strange funding source to successfully utilize. We are hopeful that if this funding continues, some fixes will be made to allow us to better spend it.

2. PRC251RB2- VPK Enrollment Update (Goal 2 of Strategic Plan)

Cindy Arenberg-Seltzer asked if we, as ELC, will comment to try and help the rule be effective.

Renee Jaffe, CEO, replied that the rule was approved by the state board earlier this month. All coalitions, including ours, sent in recommendations. They are still working on improving guidance, but it has not started. They have to create the coding in the system.

Amy Moore provided updates on VPK. Last FY, we approved 15,272 school-year applications and 632 summer applications. This resulted in 13,824 children enrolled in the school-year program and 397 children in the summer program. As of May 16, we have approved 15,283 applications. This brings the total number of children participating in VPK for FY23-24 to 14,221.

We are on track to meet the estimating conference enrollment for both program years 2023 and 2024.

As of August 21, 2024, we have approved 13,565 VPK school-year applications for the 24-25 program and 160 summer applications. There are currently 9,576 students enrolled in the VPK program for FY24-25. Since the program just started, we are anticipating approving additional applications and seeing further increases in enrollment numbers.

Our Communication Team is also watching our enrollment numbers so that we can do a targeted outreach campaign to advertise VPK for those families who may not have been able to take advantage of it yet.

Cindy Arenberg-Seltzer added that she doesn't remember seeing before the approved application vs. the enrolled, is that the typical gap, where you have 1400 children who were approved not show up for the school year, and nearly half of the summer not show?

Amy Moore replied that yes, after the pandemic, we fall almost the same in VPK every year as we did in the previous year. We reach out to those families who don't use their VPK certificate and let them know they still have time to use it. VPK lands about the same every year, and it is the standard. Many families said they don't see the benefits of VPK because of the hours and the number of slots that are available at their chosen providers.

Melody McDonald asked if public schools accept VPK certificates.

Renee Jaffe replied yes, we have a contract with the school district with VPK; around 52 public schools sites do VPK.

3. PRC251RB3- Online Provider Search Tool

Renee Podolsky asked if there are children who are there for the preschool years and then go somewhere else for VPK, because of the hours they drop off.

Howard Bakalar, CPO, replied that there are providers that don't provide VPK, so if you are in a school that does not provide VPK they will try and keep you in their 4-year-old classroom without VPK. VPK is not always a money maker for folks.

Cindy Arenberg-Seltzer asked if we know if a VPK will limit a number of VPK students that they will take.

Allison Metsch replied that there are specific rules regarding the number of kids in a classroom. There can't be more than 20, and if there are more than 20, there needs to be a lead teacher and an assistant teacher. It depends on whether they have the staff and what the capacity is. There are definitely specific qualifications for the site. You wouldn't have to have that for a private 4-year-old classroom.

Cindy Arenberg-Seltzer asked for clarification: if a provider has the capacity for 40 kids but will only let 20 VPK certificate children in, and the other 20 won't be a VPK classroom, but a 4-year old classroom instead, could this benefit to them in that what they need to provide in the VPK certificate classroom is a higher expectation than in a 4-year-old classroom.

Allison Metsch said yes that is correct.

Melody McDonald added that she currently has one in her VPK class who got the certificate and is not using it right now because they are a school-readiness child. He will be free anyway, so they are waiting to use it in the summer because they might not be free for the summer. Other parents come in thinking it's the whole day and not 3 hours, so they decide not to do it because they can't pick up their child. There are different reasons.

Online Provider Search Tool

Amy Moore reported on the Online Search Tool. Child Care Resource and Referral has not changed in the last 20 years. There are challenges within the DEL's statewide Provider Portal, and to address these challenges, ELC Broward utilized remaining stimulus funds to procure a better CCR&R tool. Webauthor was the successful applicant in this process.

After collaborating with Webauthor to design the provider search tool, we successfully launched this tool on our website. The tool enhances the pre-existing CCP&R online request process by enabling parents to conduct their own search and download lists of providers that match the criteria entered into the online intake form. Families still have the option to request contact from a Childcare Resource and Referral Specialist for further consumer information or additional provider lists. Since the release on July 1, 2024, over 300 provider searches have been completed. Subsequent to our launch of Webauthor, DEL has introduced a separate search through its chosen vendor and released a program called Wonderschool that offers a broader search capability for both early care education providers as well as K-12 schools. However, the release has

experienced quite a few issues launching its early care module and has not seen any significant adoption by DEL. DEL continues to refine that platform, so we remain focused on enhancing our provider search tool that we have available here in Broward County, such as AI-driven insight to further assist families during their search.

Cindy Arenberg-Seltzer said a great job on this. Her only concern is that the state will prohibit the use of it. Now they have launched their failed system and you won't be able to use your system that works. Hopefully, we can do something from that happening. We have to make the legislatures aware that it doesn't work and that we have a system that works for us.

Ellie Schrot asked if community partners can access this as well, and sometimes parents ask us for information related to centers that might be a good fit related to special services.

Staff responded that this tool was really meant for end users, and suggested that CDTC could support individuals in navigating the tool, if they wanted. There is a section where they can add special needs, and it will generate a list of providers that meet that need. The parents need to enter the information as themselves.

4. PRC251RB4-

Education/Quality (Goals 3 and 4 of Strategic Plan)

a. ARPA Discretionary Funds Update

- Help Me Grow Florida
- Learning Technology Services
- CLASS Observations Update

Help Me Grow Florida:

Allison Metsch reported on Education and Quality. Over the summer, we applied to become a Help Me Grow Florida affiliate. We submitted our application on August 19th and will hear at the end of August whether we were successful. This is another great resource for families; we would bring screening to additional families across the county.

Learning Technology Services:

We have kicked off working with both MarcoPolo and Age of Learning and have the approximately 175 VPK providers that are participating. VPK sites were told they could choose one of the two to implement. We hosted several Zoom overview meetings in which both vendors were given the opportunity to present their products. This offering is only VPK, and we are hopeful to see if there is Progress Monitoring improvement based on the data. The current support being offered is in learning each site and how to navigate the system. Our centers are currently in Program Monitoring (PM) 1, and our goal is to have it completed within the first thirty days of the program, which will set their baseline for this instructional year. Then, start implementing each program as prescribed by their developers. We will monitor the scores and present data later in the year.

CLASS Observations Update:

Our CLASS scores for FY 23-24 have improved from the prior year. For school readiness, our current CLASS score is 5.40, up from 5.03 last FY. For VPK, our current CLASS score is 5.52, up from 5.32 last FY.

The state's school Readiness score was 5.11, and ours was 5.40. For VPK, the state's score was 5.21, and ours was 5.52.

<p>5. PRC251RB5- Outreach/Advocacy Update</p>	<p>Additionally, Allison reported that the peer support specialist program for which we received funding from AD Henderson for 2 staff that help families go through the process of a referral and walk them through it was going well. Since we started the program, we have seen an increase in referrals and in their follow-through. We are holding the parents' hands and reminding them of the process, and we have seen an improvement. We had a survey, and 92% of the families strongly agreed that the help was helpful. 113 families attended an evaluation out of 184 referred. This is between January – June. There is a 61% follow-through rate for the 3-5 year-old, and it's an increase because last year we saw a 41%.</p> <p>For Early Steps kids, last year, we had a 33% follow-through rate, and this year, we have a 55% follow-through rate.</p> <p>We are working to help families and even have a contract with Uber for those families that need transportation. We haven't seen a big need for that so far, so we will wait and see if it continues to be a low need. It has been a special program that we have seen positive results.</p> <p>Ellie Schrot thanked the staff and gave Kuddos on this as this has helped families, and it is proven to be so successful with the peer support workers. Maybe we can replicate this around the county for other programs.</p> <p>Monica King also expressed Kudos to the team.</p> <p>Outreach/Advocacy Update</p> <p>Ancel Pratt provided an update on outreach and Advocacy. This past FY we had more landing page traffic to each one of our programs. Outreach concluded FY 23/24 on a strong note, participating in 36 outreach events and leveraging key partnerships to elevate awareness of ELC Broward services. Last year number of School Readiness applications that were submitted in July 2023 was 1154, and this year, we had 2100 applications. With outreach and advertising, we were able to increase the numbers.</p>
<p>Unfinished Business</p>	
<p>New Business</p>	<p>Renee Jaffe added that we had the executive director and the deputy director of the Association of Early Learning Coalitions here about a week ago. They are doing a tour around the state. We did a presentation on all our programs and how we do things in Broward, and she said that no one in the state does the things we do. After she left, she asked us to do around 10-15 training on all the programs that we have here for all the other coalitions at the Association's October conference.</p>
<p>Matters from the Chair</p>	<p>None</p>
<p>Matters from the Committee</p>	<p>None</p>
<p>Public Comments</p>	<p>None</p>
<p>Next Meeting</p>	<p>First week of December</p>
<p>Adjourn</p>	<p>The meeting adjourned at 11:59 PM by Dawn Liberta</p>

These minutes contain the action items of the Board meeting of the Early Learning Coalition of Broward. They do not include all of the Committee's discussions or comments on each matter or issue raised during the meeting. A tape recording of the meeting is held in the Coalition office. Corrections from the Committee will be taken before approval at the next meeting.