



Early Learning Coalition of Broward County, Inc.
Program Review Committee Meeting Minutes
January 12, 2023, at 12:00 PM
[Zoom Meeting](#)

Members in Attendance	Chair, Monica King; Cindy Arenberg-Seltzer; Richard Campillo; Dawn Liberta; Melody McDonald (Virtual); Renee Podolsky (Virtual);
Members Absent	Laurie Sallarulo; Ellie Schrot
Staff in Attendance	Renee Jaffe, CEO; Judith Merritt, COO; Christine Klima, CAO; 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; Kasey LaFrance, Contract Administration Manager.
Others in Attendance	Sharonda Bailey; Beverly Batson

Item	Action/Discussion
Welcome & Call to Order	Chair Monica King called the meeting to order at 12:05 PM. The roll was called, and a quorum was established.
Lunch & Learn – Special Needs Presentation	Allison Metsch gave a Special Needs Update. Cindy Arenberg-Seltzer suggested that our inclusion specialists be equipped with funded program guides for CSC. They should have and know the extensive amount of programming CSC funds to support these families. Our staff can be trained to be armed with that knowledge to then make broader referrals to cover multiple family needs.
Consent Agenda 1. Approve August 28, 2023, Committee meeting minutes.	There was a Motion to move the Consent Agenda by Dawn Liberta and Seconded by Renee Podolsky. Unanimously approved. Motion Passes.
Regular Committee 1. PRC242RB1 – School Readiness Enrollment/Redetermination Update (Goal 1 of Strategic Plan) 2. PRC242RB2- VPK Enrollment Update (Goal 2 of Strategic Plan) 3. PRC242RB3- Education/Quality (Goals 3 and 4 of Strategic Plan) a. Special Needs Initiatives	Amy Moore provided updates on School Readiness enrollment and redetermination. ELC Broward is continuing to enroll families in School Readiness services. Last FY, we enrolled a total of 5,171 children. Because there are still unknowns about the level of and the timing of funding we will receive from DEL for childcare slots for FY 2024. We reviewed the range of options to choose in setting enrollment strategies for FY 2024. Amy Moore provided updates on VPK. Last FY, we ended with 13,959 enrollments, and currently, we have approved 14,202 applications. Allison Metsch reported on Education and Quality. DEL released instruction for the Coalitions to apply for their allocations for the \$305million ARPA Discretionary pool that DEL is expected to award in September. Broward received approximately \$19.3 million of these funds.

<p>Update</p> <p>b. ARPA Discretionary Funds Update</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Curriculum • Trainings • A Day in K • Mental Health/Special Needs Supports • School Readiness Learning Computer Software 	<p>We are currently building another module in the CRM, and Hubert is taking the lead across the state.</p> <p>Currently we are taking a deeper dive into our special needs capacity. Staff will utilize the Florida Special Needs Rate Matrix of Services tool to determine levels of need/intervention/reimbursement for facilities serving these children.</p> <p>Ellie Schrot would love to volunteer to be in a team to work on this initiative.</p> <p>Allison Metsch updated on Training and Professional Learning Activities. Staff training will primarily focus on CLASS and Challenging Behaviors. With the addition of the vendors/contractors we will expand training topics. Stipends will be made available to encourage/reward successful training completion.</p> <p>A Motion was made by Cindy Arenberg-Seltzer to recommend to the Executive Committee subject to budget authority being recommended by Finance that they provide the budget for the procurement of trainers to conduct professional learning activities related to improving teaching environments and children’s learning experiences, including trainings related to children’s mental health and special needs. Seconded by Renee Podolsky. The Motion was unanimously approved. Motion Passes.</p> <p>Allison Metsch provided an update on Workforce Initiatives, local initiatives/pilot projects to improve kindergarten readiness.</p> <p>Community Outreach and family engagement: Staff will continue its Bookworms program, partnering with Scholastic to send free books to Broward families. Baby Bookworms will promote parent bonding/reading to infants.</p> <p>Museum of Discovery and Science, we want to have a family come and explore the museum for free.</p> <p>Parent bootcamp, staff are excited to host information and experiential training for new parents. They will focus on child development, parent-child communication, and the common rewards/challenges of first-time parenting.</p> <p>Mental Health/Special Needs Supports: Allison shared that ELC plans to partner with United Way of Broward County to co-host this year’s Mental Health Conference in May. United Way has been hosting this very successful conference for eight years.</p> <p>The statewide Help Me Grow is growing, and more money exists to expand. We are hoping to become an official Help Me Grow partner. We are waiting for more info on this.</p> <p>Staff is finalizing contract with Discount School Supplies to create Behavior Baskets to support teachers and students by providing educational material to each contracted school that helps improve students’ positive classroom behavior, encourage students to self-regulate their emotions, communicate using visuals, and relieve stress and</p>
--	--

anxiety. The Baskets will be sent directly to providers.

CLASS Update:

Allison shared those providers with a 2024-2025 CLASS score of at least 5.2 or higher and have increased their score by .2 or higher on their previous SR or VPK composite score will receive a one-time dollar incentive. The funds will be used for equipment and/or classroom materials at recognized early childhood material vendors.

Model Classroom:

ELC will transform its former call center space into a model classroom, which will be used as training for early learning educators and directors. This will allow for a hands-on experience to practice and implement content and for parent engagement opportunities.

Curriculum:

DEL and the Florida Legislature have launched a curriculum study through its designated ARPA discretionary categories. Providers will be reimbursed for any State-approved curriculum upon completing an application form that DEL has created and receipts proving the purchase of materials. Then, they will be part of a fidelity study with one of the universities of the State, and they will be surveyed on how using this curriculum is helping them in the classroom. Hubert and his team created a module to reimburse providers. The closing date for the providers to submit is January 31, 2024. We have about 150 providers participating.

School Readiness Learning Computer Software

In November 2023, the ELC procured for learning technology to enhance VPK children’s learning, as measured by FAST scores. MarcoPolo Learning, Inc was the highest-scoring vendor, and the Board approved an award at the December board meeting. At the January meeting, staff proposed also funding the second highest scoring vendor, Age of Learning, Inc. Age of Learning differs from MarcoPolo, as it offers a feature that can adapt lessons/learning content based on the child’s progress (and challenges) in real time. Adaptive technology allows the level of difficulty in each lesson and pace of progress to be specific to each child and challenges them to continue to learn harder concepts. Both technologies would be offered to VPK programs for the purpose of measuring learning gains (changes between PM1, 2 and 3) for at least one full academic year and the total budget for both agreements will be negotiated not to exceed the total procurement budget allocation of \$500,000. Both agreements will run concurrently for a term of 1.5 to 2 years (to include at least one complete VPK academic year). Monica King asked if this was a subscription to an online platform. Allison responded that it was and that we would give access to the schools and we would be paying for a subscription.

There was a **Motion** to bring to the Executive Committee to Approve the staff proposal to add Age of Learning to be funded under the Technology Aids procurement by Melody McDonald and **Seconded** by Richard Campillo. **Unanimously**

	approved. Motion Passes.
4. PRC242RB4- Advocacy/ Communications/ Outreach Update	<p>Ancel Pratt gave an overview of outreach and advocacy updates. ELC participated in over 12 community events, from resource fairs to back-to-school events. We also actively engaged families who came to our table about the SR, VPK, childcare resources and referrals, and other services we provide.</p> <p>We are currently focusing on promoting VPK enrollment to the community via community events, emails, and online marketing. We ran a targeted campaign to SR families whose children are now eligible for VPK. In just two weeks of running that campaign, we facilitated over 800 VPK page views, which we are confident will translate to higher VPK registrations by the end of the campaign.</p> <p>From July 1 through August 4, our VPK page saw 2,553 unique pageviews, a 30% increase from the previous year (1,963 unique page views).</p> <p>As for Advocacy, we have begun crafting the agenda based on issues identified locally and through the AELC.</p>
Unfinished Business	None
New Business	None
Matters from the Chair	None
Matters from the Committee	None
Public Comments	None
Next Meeting	TBD
Adjourn	The meeting adjourned at 2:59 PM.

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.



ITEM #/MEETING:	PRC243RB1 / Program Review Committee Meeting
MEETING DATE:	4/2/2024
SUBJECT:	School Readiness Enrollment/Redetermination Update
FOR ACTION:	No
RECOMMENDED ACTION:	None
FINANCIAL IMPACT:	None
AS RECOMMENDED BY:	N/A
ELC STAFF LEADS	Amy Moore, Howard Bakalar, Christine Klima

Background Information:

With the encouragement and funding from the Division of Early Learning, in FY22/23, we enrolled an additional 5,171 children, bringing us to a total of 15,500 children served (per month) and allowing us to eliminate our waitlist at the time. However, in May of 2023, DEL notified us that our SR base allocation for the next fiscal year (FY23/24) would not be sufficient to sustain the FY22/23 level of 15,500 enrollments. ELC Broward staff projected that we would need approximately \$30 million additional dollars to maintain that number of enrollments. In response to this budget gap, on June 5th, 2023, we paused new SR waitlist enrollments to decrease our census of children through natural attrition to remain within the anticipated SR enrollment allocation. Through this effort, approximately 1,800 children left our system, and our waitlist quickly climbed to almost 3,000 children in 90 days.

In September, ELC Broward received an additional \$15M in SR funding, allowing us to resume processing SR waitlist enrollments but at a less aggressive pace than the past two fiscal years. This additional funding allowed us to resume enrolling eligible children on October 4, 2023.

Current Status:

Since enrollments resumed on October 4, 2023, the ELC staff has successfully enrolled 2,456 new children, bringing the total number of enrollments for FY23/24 to 2,707 children. Currently, families experience approximately a one-month wait between the approval of their initial application and receiving a funding notification to submit additional information for enrollment. As of March 26, 2024, there are 1,150 children on the waiting list.

The outcomes of maintaining families in service through the redetermination process and results of activities in other eligibility categories, such as at-risk, contribute to our ability to sustain the pace of enrolling new families. In quarter 3, attrition stabilized without significant spikes from month to month, trending slightly down from previous quarters. There were 5,208 children due for redetermination in quarter 3. Approximately 74% (3,854) of those children were determined eligible for continued School Readiness (SR) childcare assistance. Enrollments in other SR categories, particularly the At-Risk categories, remain mostly stable. We noticed a slight upward trend in referrals from The Department of Children and Families (DCF) in quarter 3, although the impact is mitigated by previous quarters' downward trends in DCF and Child Net enrollments collectively. We will continue to monitor this for any further increases.

Recent legislation introduced the "SR Plus" program to address the "fiscal cliff" for families reaching 85% SMI, allowing families to remain in the program up to 100% SMI. Our ELC will receive a portion of the \$23 million allocated to support this initiative. The impact of this initiative on our overall census depends on corresponding rules and allocation, which are yet to be determined.

Our ongoing enrollment strategy focuses on continuing to outpace attrition rates, increasing our overall census, and serving as many eligible children as our allocation will allow. With an additional \$12 million added to our base allocation for FY 24 and probable opportunities to add a significant amount of one-time dollars to our budget, we anticipate sustaining our pace of enrollments into the next fiscal year.

The continuous improvement of our team's efficiency and productivity enables us to adapt to financial or programmatic changes within the system, ensuring stability in enrollment figures in line with the budget and our overall agency goals.

ITEM #/MEETING:	PRC243RB2 / Program Review Committee Meeting
MEETING DATE:	04/02/2024
SUBJECT:	VPK Enrollment Update
FOR ACTION:	No
RECOMMENDED ACTION:	None
FINANCIAL IMPACT:	None
AS RECOMMENDED BY:	N/A
ELC STAFF LEADS	Amy Moore, Ancel Pratt

Background Information:

Florida’s Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten (VPK) Program is free for all 4-year-old children living in the State of Florida. During the school year, 540 instructional hours (usually 3 hours per school day) are allotted for VPK learning. While the vast majority of families who take advantage of VPK do so during the school year, Summer VPK is also available in a much smaller number of preschools and School District sites. During the summer, 300 hours are allotted for learning.

Before the pandemic began, Broward County had 15,022 children enrolled in school year VPK in FY 2018-19 and 15,928 children enrolled in FY 2019-20. During the pandemic (FY 2020-21), these numbers dropped to 11,813 children enrolled in the VPK school year. During the 2021-2022 program year, schools began a new sense of normalcy with 14,018 children enrolled in the VPK school year.

The 2022-2023 VPK school year had a challenging start statewide due to some changes in Statute and Covid-Relief initiative system kinks and confusion. The VPK school year ended with a total of 13,959 children enrolled.

Current Status:

As of March 26, 2024, we have approved 15,265 VPK school-year applications for the 2023-2024 program year, with 13,664 students completing enrollments. An updated figure will be presented at the upcoming PRC meeting. For comparison, by the end of the last program year (2022-2023), we approved 15,866 VPK school-year applications, and eventually, 13,959 students completed enrollment.

Since the availability of applications for the VPK Program year 2024-2025 to parents, we have approved 7,220 VPK school-year applications, marking a 6% increase compared to the same period last year when 6,791 VPK school-year applications were approved.

Looking at projections, for the 2023-2024 program year, the VPK Estimating Conference forecasts 14,211 VPK children enrolled in Broward County. Currently, we have 13,664 children enrolled, representing 96% of the estimate. For the upcoming 2024-2025 program year, the Conference estimates 13,817 children for Broward County. While enrollments for the 2024-2025 year have yet to commence, we anticipate meeting or surpassing the estimate.

ITEM #/MEETING:	PRC243RB3 / Program Review Committee Meeting
MEETING DATE:	4/2/2024
SUBJECT:	Education & Quality Programming Update
FOR ACTION:	No
RECOMMENDED ACTION:	N/A
FINANCIAL IMPACT:	None
AS RECOMMENDED BY:	N/A
ELC STAFF LEADS	Allison Metsch, Howard Bakalar

A. ARPA Discretionary Funds Update

Background Information

As reviewed at the last Program Review Committee meeting, in August 2023, ELC staff reported that ELC Broward was expected to receive approximately \$19.3 million of the approximately \$350 million the State had remaining for ARPA Discretionary funds. Additionally, ELC staff provided the committee with an overview of the initiatives to be included in the application. Coalitions were required to provide to the Division of Early Learning (DEL) on how the funding would be utilized (based on the criterion provided by DEL). ELC Broward’s plan focused much of the plan on continuing to provide initiatives related to the upskilling and retaining of early childhood educators.

Current Status:

1. Training and Professional Learning Activities:

In November 2023, the ELC of Broward issued a Request for Proposals on various topics to improve and enhance instruction in the classroom. We are currently working with 10 external contractors to supplement training facilitated by our staff. Since February 2024, we have facilitated various trainings at night, on Saturdays and during nap time. These training courses take place over zoom and in-person. We have a high volume of educators that want to participate, so much so that we are experiencing issues in which educators share zoom links with each other without official registrations. This leads to problems for those that have registered and are then unable to participate. ELC’s education staff will be increasing the amount of training offered through zoom in addition to several in-person training courses and on-site Making the Most of Classroom Interactions (MMCI) at several schools across the county to support the high demand for training.

We will also be hosting a Special Saturday Zoom Event on May 4, 2024, called May the CLASS Be With You. This will be a large-scale webinar event that has the capacity to host up to 4,000 attendees. To date, we have paid approximately 1100 educators for training participation.

2. A Day in K:

In partnership with the Museum of Discovery and Science (MODS), we are planning an event called A Day in K, which will take place (tentatively) on June 11th. The event will provide parents and soon-to-be Kindergarten children (in the fall) a glimpse of what an actual day in kindergarten will be like while offering parents guidance on how to prepare their children for day 1. The event will be complete with various info sessions and activities for parents and children. There will be informational booths with resources. And it is Broward, so of course, we will have many community partners attending (and providing resources or services), like the School District, Broward County Library, Memorial Health, etc.

3. Childcare Classroom Management and Learning Technology Services

As discussed at the last Program Review Committee meeting, the ELC procured for learning technology to enhance VPK children’s learning as measured by the FAST scores. MarcoPolo Learning, Inc was the highest-scoring vendor, and the Board approved the award at the December board meeting. At the January PRC meeting, staff proposed contracting with both MarcoPolo and the second highest scorer in procurement, Age of Learning, Inc. This proposal was approved at the March ELC Board meeting.

The ELC team is completing contracts with both entities and is finalizing the roll-out of both technology aids across its VPK landscape of providers.

B. CLASS Observations Update

School Readiness

As required by the Division of Early Learning, all ELC’s use the CLASS (Classroom Assessment Scoring System) tool to assess School Readiness (SR) Providers who have more than 20% School Readiness enrolled children and/or those who have received a CLASS 1 violation. The tool looks at the interactions between the children and the teachers, and overall classroom management. We observe 50% of each care level and schools receive a composite score between 1 and 7. Any school scoring less than a 4.0 cannot contract with the ELC. A provider may receive an additional Quality Performance Incentive (QPI) differential payment for each enrolled School Readiness child based on their score.

Composite Score	Quality Performance Incentive Differential
4.0 to 4.49	Do not receive a differential but are able to contract
4.5 to 4.99	4%
5 to 4.99	7 %
6 to 6.99	10%

To date, our education team has observed approximately 334 School Readiness providers and 1010 classrooms since July 1, 2023. We are happy to share that our current CLASS average is a 5.41. Last fiscal year, our CLASS average was a 5.16.

Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten (VPK)

In July 2022, the Division of Early Learning required that all VPK classrooms be observed also using the CLASS tool, both during the school year and summer. We observe every VPK classroom in the county, including our public-school classes. There is no differential currently associated with the VPK CLASS score.

However, the CLASS score is going to be used as part of the new Performance Metric that will include VPK CLASS scores and our VPK FAST scores to assign VPK Programs a designation of accountability. Currently DEL is still working on the specific formula that will be used.

To date, our education team has observed 701 VPK classrooms. These classrooms were in 25 Broward County Public School sites and 387 private provider VPK sites. We are happy to share our current CLASS average for VPK is 5.52. Last fiscal year, our CLASS average was a 5.32.

While we have until June 30, 2024 to complete all CLASS assessments, we are pleased to report our team that we are projecting to have all CLASS assessments completed by the middle of May 2024.

ITEM #/MEETING:	PRC243RB4 / Program Review Committee Meeting
MEETING DATE:	4/02/2024
SUBJECT:	211 Broward/First Call for Help Funding Amount
FOR ACTION:	Yes
RECOMMENDED ACTION:	Recommend to the Executive and Finance committee decreasing funding from \$462,000 to \$125,000 over an 18 month period beginning next fiscal year
AS RECOMMENDED BY:	ELC Staff
ELC STAFF LEADS	Renee Jaffe, Christine Klima, Howard Bakalar

Background Information:

Prior to the ELC taking client eligibility determination and payment and Childcare Resource and Referral (CCR&R) services in-house in [October 2017](#), 211 Broward/First Call for Help (211) was subcontracted by the ELC to provide CCR&R services for Broward County. 211 maintained a staff devoted to educating and assisting families with young children about choosing childcare options that best met their needs. Primarily, 211 staff would receive referral calls from families enrolling in School Readiness and would provide childcare resources and referral assistance, relying on the State’s EFS data system, which utilized Tableau to conduct searches. 211 also conducted outreach activities in the community to ensure potential clients would enroll in VPK and School Readiness services. Additionally, 211 acted as the emergency assistance center/system for hurricanes and other emergencies, offering information updates on open/closed childcare centers, etc. The ELC subcontracted with 211 for \$462,000 to provide these services.

In transitioning CCR&R to the ELC, the staff and board agreed to keep 211’s contracted amount unchanged. First, transition took place over time because the Office of Early Learning (OEL) was also transitioning systems at the time. Because that largely unsuccessful statewide transition created multiple and major issues for coalitions, 211’s experience, and staff were still needed for a longer period to ensure as small a disruption in services as possible. Second, because the ELC did not have the experience or the staffing necessary for multiple aspects of CCR&R at the time of transition, 211 remained critical in providing certain functions. Finally, the need to have 211 as the trusted backup system for all disasters remained, as they are an important piece of the County’s emergency operations structure for disaster preparedness and recovery.

As the ELC built its call center to be able to respond to all incoming calls, including calls that required CCR&R, 211 remained a partner funded at its same level. Because the ELC was still building its infrastructure and did not have the capacity to conduct its own program outreach, ELC’s annual contract with 211 built-in requirements for 211 to conduct outreach in the community to promote the ELC’s services. Additionally, because of the need to build a service philosophy that was efficient and effective while also being empathetic, and because 211 provides an intensive amount of customer service training to its staff, ELC’s contract with 211 required them to conduct customer service training for ELC’s Family Services and Customer Service staff throughout the year.

Current Status:

The ELC has evolved in the last seven years into an organization that provides an excellent level of direct services to our array of customers. We now run an efficient, effective, and empathetic call center that includes CCR&R services that have been braided into our work with families. During our last Division of Early Learning monitoring visit, the State monitoring team gave the most kudos to our excellent CCR&R team. They reviewed files and satisfaction surveys, and they conducted secret shopper calls, and found our services to be timely, accurate, and customer focused. And, to make services even more customer friendly, we will now hopefully be contracting with our CRM provider to create a CCR&R tool on our website for families that like to conduct their own childcare choice searches.

Additionally, the ELC has grown a fantastic outreach team that is “everything everywhere, all at once.” We try to attend as many community events as possible, and no one would ever accuse us of sitting behind our table. We actively engage as many people as possible, letting them know about the services we provide, and our goal is to get them to use these services.

Because we have strengthened ourselves as an agency to provide effective services we had previously depended on 211 to provide for us, we are ready to “right size” 211’s existing contract with the ELC. We truly appreciate the range of programmatic assistance they have given to the ELC in the past, but we are at a point where we can execute these services without outside assistance. That said, we will continue to rely on 211 as our backup system to receive calls when the ELC has planned and sometimes unplanned breaks in service. In addition to our planned breaks—staff meetings, etc.—211 continues to step in as our call center during power outages or system malfunctions. These have happened a few times this year. And 211 will continue to act as our backup system for declared disasters, providing information for families during disaster recovery.

ELC leadership has already had a discussion with 211 concerning right-sizing their contract, and they are in agreement with ELC’s proposal to reduce their fiscal year 2025 contract to \$293,500 and reduce this to a continuing amount of \$125,000 beginning in the fiscal year 2026. In doing so, 211’s status will change from subrecipient of funds to vendor status which is more in line with the services they provide. This will give them more flexibility in utilizing these funds to cover overhead costs of providing back-up call center services for the ELC.

Recommendation:

The Program Review Committee approve and forward the recommendation of decreasing the 211 contract from \$462,000 to \$125,000 over an eighteen month period beginning with the FY 2025.