

**Early Learning Coalition of Escambia County**  
**Board Meeting Minutes**  
**October 10, 2019 - 10:00 a.m.**  
**Chair: Van Mansker**

**Members in Attendance**

Van Mansker	Sheryl Rehberg	Brian Wyer
Richard Wright	Roger Thompson	Cindy Kirk
Craig Jones	Judy Dickinson	Mona Jackson
Mary Ann Bickerstaff		

**Members Called In**

Christina Doss	Melody Meier
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**Members Absent**

Peggy Steward	Mary Ann Winstead	Dr. Laura Edler
Beate Bolton	Wendi Ochs	Drew Hardgrave
Mary Ann Winstead		

**Staff**

Bruce Watson	Becki Rutchland	Vicki Pugh
Jamie Phelps	Paula Rollins	Dawn Engel

**Welcome and Introductions:**

The Board meeting was called to order by Mr. Mansker and note was made that notification of this meeting of the Board of Directors was posted to the Coalition Public Calendar Board and website on September 23, 2019 and sent to the Pensacola News Journal for publication on September 23, 2019.

**I. Public Comments:**

There were no public comments.

**II. Chair Comments:**

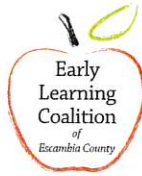
**a. Approval of Consent Agenda: Meeting Agenda, and Minutes of August 8, 2019, and Financial Statement for July 2019**

Upon a motion made by Mr. Jones, with a second by Ms. Rehberg, the Consent Agenda consisting of the Agenda, the Minutes of August 8, 2019, and the July Financial Statement was approved and accepted without objection. Mr. Watson noted that the August and End of Year Financials for Fiscal Year 2018/2019 will be provided to the Board at the next meeting.

**IV. Executive Committee Report:**

**a. New OEL Grant NOA – Budget Impact**

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The Coalition has received from the OEL three additional Notice of Awards (NOA) that are additions to the original NOA for this year. These additions were \$252,787 dollars for Quality Performance Incentives (QPI), \$63,199 for the Pre-school Development Grant (PDG), and then an additional \$8,000 was awarded for stipends to Providers who participate in PDG related quality programs. An additional \$50,586 was awarded for Program Assessment efforts. In total, including the \$168,934 that was provided for SR Match, nearly \$500,000 in School Readiness funding has been added since the original NOA was issued in July. Mr. Watson noted that he and Ms. Rutchland will be adding the new figures to the Coalition budget and that a revised budget will be brought to the Board for review and approval at the next meeting. Overall, the changes will not impact the budget in a major way because the additional funds are going to either specific quality programs or to direct services. Mr. Jones asked if the OAMI Award is the same as the OEL Grant award. Mr. Watson explained that the OAMI (Outreach, Awareness and Monitoring Initiative) award is specifically for VPK outreach and monitoring and that the Coalition signs a separate agreement with the OEL for OAMI.

**b. Board Member Reappointment – Melody Meier (Oct 19)**

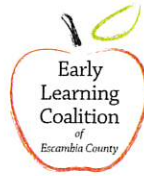
Mr. Mansker opened discussion of the Board reappointment of Ms. Meier. Mr. Watson noted that Ms. Meier's first term expires in October 2019 and that he has spoken to her and she has expressed enthusiasm regarding serving a second term. Upon a motion made by Ms. Bickerstaff and seconded by Mr. Wyer, Ms. Meier's reappointment was approved without objection.

**c. Match Funder Sliding Fee Scale**

As a result of the 2019 Legislative session appropriations were made to increase State funding Coalitions could use to match local funding and changes were made to how the match program for the State would be conducted. Coalitions are no longer obligated to raise locally a proportionate share of the State's requirement to match Federal funding for working poor at 6% (16 to 1). Coalitions are still strongly encouraged to continue to solicit local support, but it is no longer compulsory. Additionally, the Child Care Executive Program (CCEP) was effectively set aside and all Coalitions are now authorized to use local donations that were previously dedicated to match to serve children under using the same qualification criteria of the CCEP. This means families earning between 150% Federal Poverty Level (FPL) and 85% State Median Income (SMI) can qualify to be served in the School Readiness Program. The OEL has awarded the Coalition \$168,934 to be matched on a one for one basis. This amount when combined with local funding means the Coalition has approximately \$477,000 to serve what is a new category of children. A modified version of the Coalition's Sliding Fee Scale was provided to show the income ranges for families that will qualify under this new SR Match Program. The white portion of the chart shows the traditional determination factor. The green portion of the chart shows income ranges for applicants that may be served with the new funding. The red portion of the chart indicates the income limits for all families in the SR Program. The OEL Family Portal will still inform parents when they are over income (150% FPL) for the SR Program, but now it also includes a note that advises them to contact the Coalition because they may qualify for services using local funding. Currently, there are 30 children in the SR Match Program. The Coalition will strive to increase those numbers with a goal of enrolling 120 to 150 children.

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Once this goal is achieved then enrollment numbers and fund usage can be managed with regular BG8 funding. Ms. Rehburg encouraged promoting the new program and Mr. Watson indicated that the modified Sliding Fee Scale with SR Match qualification highlighted will be published on the Coalition website. Mr. Jones asked if the Coalition is targeting applicants for the new program. Mr. Watson indicated that upon receipt of authorization for the OEL to implement this new program all parents who since the start of the fiscal year were determined to be over income were immediately contacted and offered services, and most of the applicants accepted services. Ms. Bickerstaff suggested offering flyers for the new program. Mr. Mansker asked Mr. Wyer if the new scale can be publicized and offered at the Gulf Coast Minority Chamber of Commerce. Mr. Wyer indicated he would be happy to do so and said that he will send an email blast with the new scale and provide hard copies as well. The Match Funder Sliding Fee Scale will be emailed to all Board members. Mr. Mansker noted that the new scale should go a long way to raising enrollment numbers and Mr. Watson indicated that it should help raise the numbers quicker. Mr. Watson mentioned that related to this are parent fees, which are planned to be reviewed in the coming months and will be included on the agenda for the RDC meeting.

**d. Status Report on County Funding for 2020**

The County Commission approved the Coalition to receive a grant of \$238,875 again this year. The executed County Funding Agreement will be delivered today. Mr. Mansker commented that the award is good even though the Coalition requested \$300,000. Mr. Watson indicated that at the County Commission meeting to approve the final budget LOST Funding was not discussed. Everything in this budget category was approved as budgeted.

**V. Executive Director's Report:**

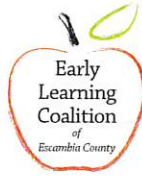
**a. SR/VPK Fiscal Year Benchmark, Utilization/Enrollment/Wait List Status and Contracting Summary Status Reports**

1. Benchmark Report:

Two Benchmark Summary Reports were provided, one for the year to date and one summarizing Fiscal Year 2018/2019. The End of Year Summary Report reflects expenditures and balances after the OEL de-obligated (pulled back) \$1.4 million in unspent funding. Fortunately, unlike some Federal programs, the OEL does not reduce future awards due to underspending. As previously presented to the Board, the reason the Coalition under executed last year was because not enough parents applied for services. The Coalition is still trying to determine why roughly 47% of applicants never follow up to finish the process. Mr. Watson indicated that although August Financials was not available, a Benchmark Tracker for August was provided. The Coalition is lagging in slot expenditures at this point. By budget the Coalition should have expended \$2.8 million for the first two months but has only expended \$2.4 million. Related to this the Coalition is seeing about a \$100,000 differential each month between what the Coalition determines it should be paying providers using EFS Legacy versus the results coming out of EFS MOD, with EFS MOD being the higher of the two.

2. Enrollment/Wait List Status Report

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There are 3,263 children enrolled in the School Readiness program. The Coalition is funded to have 3,300 to 3,400 children enrolled, and to catch up on being under expended to date could enroll 3,500 children. The SRMT category has been added to the report for the new SR Mtach Program and 27 children have been enrolled. The trend continues of 45-50% of parents who start the application process do not follow through. VPK has 2,052 children enrolled.

### 3. Contracting and Fraud Summary Report

With the addition of several new Providers, there are 83 SR Providers. The new Providers have provided some relief for parents, especially with respect to infant and toddler care which has been limited over the last six or seven months. Mr. Wyer asked Mr. Watson if the Coalition has a contract with the Provider whose childcare worker who was recently arrested for allegedly hitting a child. Mr. Watson replied that the Provider used to have a contract with the Coalition but that they lost the contract several months ago due to a similar incident. He further noted that the Provider voluntarily closed so DCF did not have to become involved. In addition, he mentioned that it is encouraging that the Sherriff's Office is acting on the matter as that has not always happened in the past. There are 77 VPK Providers. There are no new fraud cases to report. Mr. Watson and Ms. Engel gave depositions in the fraud case against former Providers Ms. Eboni Singer and Ms. Roletta Shelton. Mr. Thompson was deposed as well.

## VI. Old Business:

### a. **EFS Modernization Transition Update**

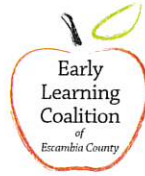
The Coalition continues to discover issues with the new Statewide Data System (EFS MOD). The system still does not work reliably, although there are some features that working well enough to use. As a result, the Coalition still requires Providers to submit both electronic and paper attendance sheets, however, there are times when the two do not match. This will be an item for education and discussion at the upcoming Town Hall Meetings later in October.

### b. **Children's Funding Institute Training Seminar Debrief**

Mr. Watson attended the Children's Funding Institute Training Seminar in Denver. The Institute funded airfare and hotels for three people from our community. Ms. Krupa with Achieve Escambia and Ms. Harper of the Escambia Education Foundation also attended the seminar. Because the purpose of this seminar was not directly related to State funded program's he took PTO and did not charge any expenses to the Coalition. The seminar was to promote efforts and assist communities in getting children's initiatives on the ballot. Training was provided on how to go about getting initiatives, such as a campaign for a Children's Services Council (CSC), approved as ballot measures. Mr. Watson said that he learned a lot at the seminar.

Related to this, a group of local businesspeople have formed an exploratory group to see if it is possible to get a CSC. Mr. Julian MacQueen of Innisfree Hotels offered \$10,000 dollars and several other group members have indicated they will approach their funding authorities and ask for matching donations of \$10,000 dollars in order to form a Political Action Committee (PAC). The first step will be to conduct a survey to see how many people in the community would vote to establish a CSC in Escambia. The group has narrowed down selection to two polling groups





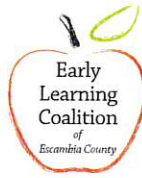
and has proposed to immediately move forward with the process of conducting a formal poll. The Pensacola Young Professionals conducted their annual Community Quality of Life Survey and two questions related to a CSC were added to the poll. Of the approximately 300 respondents 75% indicated that they would vote in favor of a CSC. The poll questions were not vague and provided details about the function of a CSC. The exploratory group agreed that a formal poll should be conducted prior to any effort to get the initiative on the 2020 ballot. Cost estimates for the poll are in the \$15,000 to \$20,000 range. If the poll indicates there is enough enthusiasm regarding the matter it is almost certain the community will move forward on this. Mr. Watson noted that any Coalition staff members participating in the campaign will use personal time off to do so. Mr. MacQueen has volunteered to be the owner of the PAC. Mr. Watson indicated that he will follow up with the Board after he contacts OEL for guidance on endorsing the PAC and related efforts. Ms. Bickerstaff asked if someone can speak about the CSC initiative so that the issue is publicized. Mr. Mansker asked if Mr. Watson can present a condensed version of the Annual Breakfast presentation and Mr. Watson agreed to do so at the December Board meeting.

## **VII. New Business:**

### **a. OEL New Executive Director**

The new OEL Executive Director is Ms. Shan Goff. Ms. Goff has returned to the position after resigning several years ago as required by the State retirement program. Ms. Goff was formerly with the VPK Desk with the Department of Education before becoming the Director of OEL the first time. Ms. Goff met with AELC Executive Committee. The following are highlights of this meeting.

The State Legislature has declared this year to be the Year of Early Education and will be holding more meetings regarding early education during this legislative session. Commissioner of Education Corcoran is ready to focus on improving Kindergarten Readiness Rates now rather than later. Over \$6 million dollars in Education funding has been dedicated to increase teacher salaries. There is a possibility that similar budgetary action may take place for Early Education. Mr. Watson noted that VPK Readiness Rates become binding next year and that, unlike in the past, there will now be consequences for low performers. There is a proposal that FLKRS will be administered during the VPK year, in addition to the start of kindergarten, and that these scores may be used to determine VPK Readiness Rates. Someone who is not affiliated with the Provider would be conducting these assessments. Ms. Rehberg noted that would support the fidelity of the process. Additionally, a Rule was passed recently that if children show improvement in all four domains of the VPK Assessment, that is from AP1 to AP3, then Providers may get up to a 10% credit toward their readiness rate score for the percentage of children who show gains. The extra points could allow some Providers to avoid being put on probation. Mr. Jones asked if the Coalition has a list of Providers who are on Probation and Mr. Watson replied that currently there are five VPK Providers on probation and that changes may be coming in the next year.



OEL has published a new list of approved curricula. At least 75% of Providers will need to purchase a new curriculum. Most Providers use Creative Curriculum and the cost is around \$5,000 for approved version. Mr. Watson indicated that the Coalition is considering subsidizing 50% of the cost and that this will be a topic of discussion at the upcoming Town Hall meetings in October. The Coalition hopes that the subsidy will allow Providers to purchase high quality curriculum instead of trying to save money on curriculum that is of lesser quality. Providers must have curriculum from the approved list in order to contract with Coalition. The subsidy proposal is an action item that will come to the Resource Development Committee and Executive Committee at their next meetings and will be subject to further discussion and possible approval. Mr. Jones asked if outside training is available for the curriculum and Mr. Watson indicated that, yes, the Coalition has paid for outside training in the past and is considering doing so again.

**b. AELC New Executive Director**

Ms. Erin Smeltzer is the new Executive Director of the Association of Early Learning Coalitions (AELC). Ms. Smeltzer came to the AELC from the OEL. Mr. Watson noted that Ms. Smeltzer's transition to the AELC was in accord with her desire to be in position to have a greater impact on the future of the children of Florida.

**c. Annual Code of Ethics**

The annual review of the Code of Ethics was conducted. Acknowledgement forms were signed by Board members present. The Code of Ethics will be provided to Board Members not present. Note was made that there was a finding on the last OEL Accountability Review that one Board member failed to submit their signed acknowledgment form.

**d. Town Hall Meetings October 26 and 29**

Town Hall meetings will be held at Deliverance Tabernacle on October 26 and Myrtle Grove Baptist Church on October 29. Mr. Mansker encouraged Board Members to attend. Mr. Watson noted that there is great benefit in presenting information in person. All Providers and their staff members are invited and encouraged to attend. Topics for discussion will include provider rates, program assessments, and SR curriculum and input will be sought from attendees. Feedback from the meetings will be taken to the RDC and then on to the Board accordingly.

**e. BOD/Committee Packages Posted to Web Site Vice Emailed**

Meeting materials will now be posted to the Coalition web site in advance of the meeting instead of sending the packet as attachments to multiple emails. Board and Committee Members will receive an email with call in details and a link to the materials.

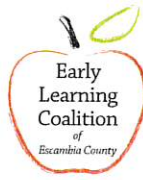
**VIII. ED/Chair Travel: (I)**

- a. ED: AELC/OEL ED Meeting, October 23-24, Tallahassee
- b. ED: AELC Meeting, November 14, Fort Myers

**IX. Adjourn**

The Board meeting adjourned at 11:09 a.m.

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**Next Meeting:** December 12, 2019 10:00 a.m. at the Early Learning Coalition Office, 3300 North Pace Boulevard, Suite 210, Pensacola, FL 32505

**Minutes approved by:**

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Sheryl Rehberg, Board Secretary

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Date

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