



Location: 1130 N Eglin Pkwy, Shalimar, FL 32579

Date: 10.28.25

Time: 11:00 a.m.

Board Approved: 2.3.26

Coalition Board Meeting Minutes

Board Members Present:

Amanda Grandy, Private Sector - Gubernatorial Appointee, Chair
Lindsay Roberts, Private Sector - Osprey Title, Vice-Chair
Jeff Brown, Private Sector - Bridging Analytics, LLC (Via Zoom)
Shea Boykin, Private Sector - Okaloosa County Teachers Federal Credit Union, Secretary
Michele Burns, CareerSource Okaloosa Walton
Amanda Colwell, Okaloosa County Health Department Appointee
Caroline Durkee, Walton County Commissioner's Appointee (Via Zoom)
Kathy Curry, Representative of faith-based childcare providers (Via Zoom)
Amanda Negron, Private Sector - HSU Foundation (Via Zoom)
Beth Brant, Private Sector - Poly, Inc.
Melissa Sidoti, DCF Regional Administrator Delegate Appointee
Ardelle Bush, Private Sector - Healthy Start
Gretta Barrett, Private Sector - Coldwell Banker Realty
Julie Webb, Private Sector - Advanced Sacred Hope Academy (ASHA)
Kim Cox, Private Sector - Origin Bank
Sarah Davis, Private Sector - Gubernatorial Appointee (Via Zoom)
Victoria Ebert, Private Sector - Phm Management (Via Zoom)
Brittany Wyatt, Northwest Florida State College President's Appointee (Via Zoom)
Emily Edge, Early Steps – Representative for an Agency Serving Children with Disabilities
Gabrielle Griffith, Private Sector - 850 Therapy, LLC (Via Zoom)

Board Members Absent:

Kim Gillis, Head Start Appointee
Bambi Sealy, DCF District Administrator Appointee
Amy Bowles, Okaloosa County Schools Appointee
Kristen Murdy, Representative of private for-profit childcare providers

Coalition Team Present:

Dana Hodges, CEO
Sondra Moffit, CFO
Angie Strumeyer, COO
Deanna Hernandez, Executive Administrator

Public Present:

Gabrielle Griffith, 850 Therapy
John Spolski, Assistant Superintendent

Quorum:

Quorum established 11:02 a.m.

- I. Call to Order – Amanda Grandy, Chair
The meeting is called to order at 11:05 a.m.



II. Consent Agenda*

a. Motion to Accept the agenda.

Beth made the motion to approve the Consent Agenda with changes.
Motion is carried by unanimous vote.

b. Minutes Coalition Board Meeting, August 5, 2025

c. Minutes Program Committee Meeting, August 28, 2025

Kim C. made the motion to approve the Meeting Minutes as presented.
Motion is carried by unanimous vote.

d. Summary of Executed Contracts

Facilitating the Homefront Helpers Cohorts on behalf of the Operation Childcare Project has generated a new stream of income. Furthermore, the Coalition renewed several contracts and received an additional \$2.4 million in School Readiness funding. Several contracts will be up for renewal in the near future that require Request for Proposals (RFP).

e. Status of Agency & Monitoring

In addition to our ongoing annual external audit, quarterly desk review, and expenditure monitoring, we have also successfully completed the ARPA discretionary monitoring and received a positive report with only one observation and no findings.

III. Treasurer's Report

a. Quarterly Financial Report*

i. Financial Dashboard

As of August 31, 2025, we served 1407 children in SR, 2 in SR plus and 1599 children in VPK with the program year is at 16.67% completion. A brief description of the SR Plus program is provided to the new board members.

ii. Statement of Activities

The revenues and expenses are presented noting that the largest expenses are SR Direct services and VPK Provider expenses.

iii. Statement of Financial Position

A year over year comparison of the assets and liabilities is presented noting that ARPA funding in the prior fiscal year accounts for some of the differences. Some other variances are attributed to a decrease in subscriptions and postage expenses, in addition to a reduction in our Right-of-Use (ROU) asset, in accordance with the terms of our lease agreement.

Michele B. made the motion to accept the Quarterly Financial Report as presented.
Motion is carried by unanimous vote.

b. Local SR Match Report

Currently we have received \$63,381.60 in matching funds this fiscal year, having spent \$20,022.77 to date. We are managing expenditures to stay within budget. However, our

pipeline of match funders has significantly decreased due to a community-wide reduction in non-profit funding. We project this trend will continue next year and are requesting the board's assistance in identifying additional community funders.

IV. New Business

a. Report on Financial Monitoring Results*

Thomas Howell Ferguson P.A. conducted financial monitoring of the Florida Division of Early Learning's ARPA funds resulting in one Provider observation and no findings.

Kim C. made the motion to approve the Financial Monitoring Results Report as presented.
Motion is carried by unanimous vote.

b. RFP – Office Lease*

Our office lease is up in February 2026. While our first choice is to remain in our current space, we need to do our due diligence, so an RFP will be issued to identify potential alternative properties. Some discussion takes place. We would appreciate suggestions for other comparable properties to consider.

Melissa S. made the motion to initiate the RFP for Office Space as presented.
Motion is carried by unanimous vote.

c. Board Member Application – Gabrielle Griffith

Gabrielle Griffith is introduced to the Board. Gabrielle brings a unique perspective and a passionate commitment to expanding resources and raising awareness for the children and families we serve.

Shea B. made the motion to approve Gabrielle Griffith's Application as presented.
Motion is carried by unanimous vote.

i. I.A. Board Membership –

The document has been updated to add Gabrielle Griffith as a new Board Member.

Beth B. made the motion to approve the I.A. Board Membership as presented.
Motion is carried by unanimous vote.

d. United Way

We received \$40,000 in match funding (\$35,000 from United Way and \$5,000 from The CHELCO Foundation) and are collaborating with them to expand the Reading PALS program. The initiative is gaining momentum, with more providers continuing to join the program.

V. Old Business

a. Enrollment Update

We have been actively enrolling children and successfully cleared the entire waitlist by issuing funding notifications in small batches. Approved applicants will receive funding notifications



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weekly on Mondays. Some providers have openings for new enrollments.

We recently brought together Childcare Directors and Owners for our first town hall meeting. Our BOD Provider Representatives facilitated a conversation that explored three important questions: "Where are the children?", "Where is the workforce?", and "How can the community help?" The meeting was marked by engaging and valuable discussions.

VI. Department Updates

a. Compliance and Eligibility

VPK enrollments have risen with 2009 children currently in the program and 1191 children enrolled in SR. This is supported by our network of 107 providers, which includes 75 VPK providers, 70 SR providers and 38 that offer both SR and VPK services. As of September, we began releasing families from the waitlist and all funding notifications have been sent out. The number of providers has shifted recently, with new facilities joining and some exiting for various reasons.

Board member Melissa Sidoti addressed the board regarding the Welfare Trust fund, suggesting that it could potentially be used to assist families in Walton County. The ELC has decided to investigate the possibility of implementing this.

b. Education

The team is conducting targeted site visits to provide focused support. This is based on available data, director input, and observations. Provider on probation (POPS) coaching will begin with the director and Education Manager before transitioning to the Education Specialists.

The Education Team is conducting CLASS assessments alongside our contracted partner, the Children's Forum. All assessments are scheduled for completion by March 31, 2026, to allow time for additional support if needed.

The team continues to monitor Ages and Stages Questionnaires (ASQs), addressing any areas of concern found in provider and family-completed child assessments. They offer developmentally appropriate resources to support skill development and growth and provide referrals for more intensive support when necessary.

The deadline for FAST PM 1 is coming up, as the PM 2 window opens for most participants the week of November 10, 2025.

We are in the process of identifying interested infant and toddler providers to participate in the LENA Grow pilot, a program that measures vocal and verbal interactions.

VII. CEO Updates

a. Event Updates

Dana presented a summary of ELC's recent events and detailed upcoming event dates. The board's participation in these events is strongly encouraged. Additionally, the Storybook Village event, which took place on October 25, 2025, was highlighted.

b. Legislative Updates

The legislative priorities that all of the state's Early Learning Coalitions (ELCs) have agreed upon

are outlined in a document from AELC. Discussed are the current situation, challenges and solutions related to the School Readiness program. A county-specific version is currently being drafted and will be distributed to Board members upon its release.

c. Team Updates

The open Eligibility position has been successfully filled by Savannah Alber. We greatly appreciate the continued part-time support from the ELC of Northwest Florida to ensure operational continuity. We anticipate reopening the lobby for walk-in services following the completion of Savannah's training period.

d. VPK Updates

The VPK program saw strong results, with 57 providers (25 excellent, 32 above expectations) performing at or above the expected level. There were 8 providers who met expectations, while a few others were rated below expectations or received an incomplete designation. We are committed to supporting all providers in their journey toward better outcomes, with targeted assistance for those who met or fell below expectations. In a show of support and recognition for their outstanding performance, Dana will be visiting all providers who achieved an excellent rating.

A collaborative effort is underway with the Okaloosa and Walton County School Districts to boost kindergarten and VPK enrollment, following a recent decline. As VPK students prepare to transition to kindergarten, they will receive a special letter from our CEO and the School Superintendents, congratulating them on this important milestone.

We have applied for a \$10,000 grant through the Emerald Coast Community Wellness Foundation to help purchase the Transition to VPK kits for children entering the VPK program. We applied to for a \$2,000 Consumer Education grant from Moose Lodge #2193 to help increase enrollments.

We have put together a Read Together literacy initiative to encourage families to read at home, prioritize the importance of work-life harmony in our community, promote literacy for all and support children's lifelong success by increasing our community's access to free children's books. We currently have two literacy programs for businesses to participate in: Books for Bosses and Rally for Reading. Please visit our website for more information on how to apply.

VIII. Action Items

a. Increase SR & VPK Enrollments

We are actively working to increase enrollments.

b. Early Educator Workforce

Our Early Educator Taskforce is addressing the need for more early childhood professionals. As part of our recruitment effort, we're sending a flyer to high school seniors and juniors to raise awareness of Early Education as a vital and rewarding career choice. We are currently seeking donation opportunities to assist with advertising.

c. Leverage Community Partners

To maximize our reach, we ask that you leverage your personal and professional connections to build awareness.



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IX. Public Comment

Mr. Spolski showed his support for the ELC partnership, which focuses on preparing young people for the future. He acknowledged that the community struggles with housing, childcare, and before and after-school care.

X. Adjournment

Amanda adjourned the meeting at 12:45 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
Deanna Hernandez
Executive Administrator