Early Learning Coalition OF THE EMERALD COAST

Location: 1130 N Eglin Pkwy, Shalimar, FL 32579
Date: 5.5.26
Time: 11:00 a.m.
Board Approved: 8.11.2026

Coalition Board Meeting Minutes

Board Members Present:
Amanda Grandy, Private Sector - Gubernatorial Appointee, Chair (Via Zoom)
Lindsay Roberts, Private Sector - Osprey Title, Vice-Chair
Jeff Brown, Private Sector - Bridging Analytics, LLC, Treasurer
Michele Burns, CareerSource Okaloosa Walton
Kathy Curry, Representative of faith-based childcare providers
Beth Brant, Private Sector - Poly, Inc.
Brittany Wyatt, Northwest Florida State College President's Appointee (Via Zoom)
Emily Edge, Early Steps – Representative for an Agency Serving Children with Disabilities
Bambi Sealy, DCF District Administrator Appointee
Ardelle Bush, Private Sector - Healthy Start
Sarah Davis, Private Sector - Gubernatorial Appointee
Amanda Colwell, Okaloosa County Health Department Appointee
Amanda Negron, Private Sector - HSU Foundation
Erica Belton, Head Start Director Appointee
Christa Pacheco, Representative of private for-profit childcare providers

Board Members Absent:
Shea Boykin, Private Sector - Okaloosa County Teachers Federal Credit Union, Secretary
Gretta Barrett, Private Sector - Coldwell Banker Realty
Amy Bowles, Okaloosa County Schools Appointee
Caroline Durkee, Walton County Commissioner's Appointee
Gabrielle Griffith, Private Sector - 850 Therapy, LLC
Julie Webb, Private Sector - Advanced Sacred Hope Academy (ASHA)
Kim Cox, Private Sector - Origin Bank
Victoria Ebert, Private Sector - Phm Management
Melissa Sidoti, DCF Regional Administrator Delegate Appointee

Coalition Team Present:
Dana Hodges, CEO
Tara Thomson, CFO
Deanna Hernandez, Executive Administrator

Public Present:
Anthony McKinney (Via Zoom)

Quorum:
Quorum established 11:00 a.m.

I. Call to Order – Amanda Grandy, Chair
   The meeting is called to order at 11:04 a.m.

II. Consent Agenda*

a. Motion to Accept the agenda.

> Amanda C. made the motion to approve the Agenda with changes.
> Motion is carried by unanimous vote.

III. Treasurer's Report

a. Quarterly Financial Report*

It is reported that the program year is 66.6% complete as of 2/28/26. The total revenues were $10,694,604 while total expenses were $10,694,595, resulting in a net increase of $9; total assets were $5,117,945, liabilities $4,844,979, bringing the fund balance to $486,367.

As of February 28, 2026, 44% of the operating budget remains available, with 1,351 School Readiness children served ($6.87M), 2 SR Plus children ($3,968), and 2,000 VPK children ($4.42M), with 2.7% administrative 97.4% in direct services.

b. Local SR Match Report

As of February 28, 2026, total local funding awarded was $68,381.49, with $48,722.42 utilized to date and a remaining balance of $19,659.07.

c. Summary of Executed Contracts

Several insurance and benefits-related contracts are scheduled for renewal at the end of the fiscal year, while certain one-time contracts expiring on June 30, 2026, will not be renewed.

d. Status of Agency & Monitoring

It is noted that we have completed two (2) desk reviews and the prior year monitoring audit, both reviews reported no disallowed items or findings. The Audit Final Report is still pending and there are no further audits or monitorings for the remainder of the fiscal year.

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

IV. New Business

a. Board Member Update

- Ardelle Bush has retired from Healthy Start therefore leaving her role on the Board.
- The Board reviewed the Board Membership application submitted by Makiko Simmons to fill a vacant Private Sector position.

> Michele made the motion to approve the new Board Members Applications as presented.
> Motion is carried by unanimous vote.

i. HeadStart Director

Erica Belton of Lutheran Services Florida has been appointed as the new HeadStart Representative.

ii. Private For-Profit Provider Representative

Christa Pacheco of Childcare Network/Child Development Schools was voted by fellow Childcare centers to fill the Provider Representative position.

b. I.A. Board Membership template*
This template has been updated to add the new Board Members to the roster. Once approved it will be sent to DEL for approval.

> Sarah made the motion to approve the Board Membership template with the addition of the newly Appointed Member.
> Motion is carried by unanimous vote.

c. Coalition By-Laws*
Some minor updates were made to further clarify and expand upon the duties of the CEO and officers of the Coalition.

> Amanda N. made the motion to approve the Coalition By-Laws as presented.
> Motion is carried by unanimous vote.

d. COOP*
The Early Learning Coalition Team roster was updated.

> Kathy made the motion to approve the COOP as presented.
> Motion is carried by unanimous vote.

e. Anti-fraud Plan*
The Board conducted a review of the document, which had not been reviewed in several years. No changes were recommended or made at this time.

> Sarah made the motion to approve the Anti-Fraud Plan as presented.
> Motion is carried by unanimous vote.

f. Unrestricted Funds Policy*
This is an internal policy to establishes guidance for the responsible and strategic use of unrestricted funds in alignment with the organization's mission, financial sustainability, fiduciary responsibilities, and strategic priorities.

> Amanda C. made the motion to approve the Unrestricted Funds Policy as presented.
> Motion is carried by unanimous vote.

g. Children's Forum Contract*
INCENTIVE$ Florida, administered by The Children's Forum, awards annual stipends to early learning and family child care educators, directors, and owners for their higher education achievements and commitment to their programs. This is a sole-source purchase requiring prior approval from the State. The necessary steps to obtain such approval been completed.

> Beth made the motion to approve the Children's Forum Contract as presented.
> Motion is carried by unanimous vote.

V. Old Business

a. Enrollment Update

To support increased Kindergarten and Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) enrollment, we are collaborating with the School Districts through joint efforts. These events also served to raise awareness that the VPK program is available at many childcare centers throughout Okaloosa and Walton Counties.

A part of the Transition to Kindergarten plan, the Okaloosa County School District as well as some childcare centers, will be implementing a resiliency curriculum, Harmony Academy, to help support children and their families during the transition process.

We are partnering with Walton County to host a literacy training that private providers will be invited to attend. We are exploring additional partnership opportunities for future collaboration.

VI. Department Updates

a. Compliance and Eligibility

The Compliance Team

- On-site provider monitoring has been completed.
- Mandatory contract meetings are scheduled, providing five (5) options 3 will take place here in Shalimar, 1 in Crestview and 1 in DeFuniak Springs.

The Eligibility Team

- Provider profiles are 96% complete. The remaining 4% consist of contracted providers currently in progress with incomplete status.
- School Readiness (SR) enrollments have increased to 1,361.
- Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) enrollments are currently at 1,945 and are beginning to wind down as the program year ends.
- There are currently 1491 approved VPK application for the 2026-27 fiscal year.

b. Education

The Education Team

- Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) FAST – PM3 results determine Summer Bridge eligibility; children scoring below the 25th percentile qualify for the free school district program.
- The 2026-27 Strategic Plan and Training calendar are currently being finalized.

VII. CEO Updates

a. Maranta Copy Co. Contract

We contracted with them to perform a marketing spend audit to see what we can improve upon to boost our visibility and foster genuine engagement with our audience. They will also help us navigate our social media marketing to achieve more impactful outcomes.

b. Event Updates

A Community Impact report was provided to outlining recent and upcoming events, with a continued focus on initiatives that are intentional, mission-driven, and essential to the work we do.

Through our continued partnership with Okaloosa County Health Improvement Partnership (OCHIP) and the Okaloosa County Health Department, the recent 5k event raised $7,000. These funds will support SAFE Start Grants, administered through the Health Department to assist childcare centers enhance security at their facilities.

c. Legislative Updates
It was noted that SB 1690 revised the term “family day care home” to “family child care home.” Additionally, the TEACH Scholarship Program Administrator will establish and administer the Center for Early Childhood Professional Recognition to ensure statewide alignment of training.

Panhandle Regional Coalition was established through a collaborative effort among the Leaders of ELC Emerald Coast, ELC Northwest Florida, ELC Santa Rosa Beach and ELC Escambia to collectively strengthen legislative advocacy for the region. Key initiatives include:

- help reduce barriers amongst cross-county contracts
- align internal policies and procedures
- Host a four-county multi-day Summit

The Association of Early Learning Coalitions (AELC) elected Dana to its Executive Team and also established a Military Ad-Hoc Committee, for which Dana was elected as Chair.

d. Team Updates
It was announced that the newly created Chief Program Officer (CPO) position has been filled by Jennifer Williamson, who will start on June 15th, 2026.

VIII. Action Items

a. Increase SR & VPK Enrollments
The enrollments initiatives discussed throughout the meeting will be implemented.

b. Early Educator Workforce
Recruitment efforts are underway through participation in local High School career fairs, along with the distribution early education workforce recruitment flyers to middle and high schools throughout Okaloosa and Walton Counties.

c. Leverage Community Partners
Efforts to secure more Walton County Board representation are ongoing.

IX. Public Comment
None

X. Adjournment
Amanda adjourned the meeting at 12:03 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
Deanna Hernandez
Executive Administrator