

Minutes of a Meeting of the Board of Directors of Early Learning Coalition of Southwest Florida.

October 31st, 2025

Time and Place of Meeting

A meeting of the Programs Committee of Board of Directors of Early Learning Coalition of Southwest Florida, was held on October 31st, 2025 commencing at approximately 9:00am EDT at the offices of the Company located at 2675 Winkler Avenue, Suite 300, Fort Myers, Florida 33901 and virtually via Microsoft Teams.

Call to Order; Roll Call

The following directors, constituting a quorum, were present in person or by teleconference:



- Michele King, Program Committee Chair (retiring)
- Bethany Quisenberry, Program Committee Chair
- Joanne Moran
- Stacie Britton
- Joanne Pachiva
- Stephanie Rode
- Rodrigo Gamboa
- Patricia Dominguez
- Jamie Slack
- Amanda Thomas
- Emma McIntyre
- Beth McBride
- Joanne Fuciu
- Jamie Schofield
- Damaris Boone

ELC Staff present:

- Melanie Stefanowicz, Chief Executive Officer
- Gilda Duran, Chief Program Officer
- Richard Cocchieri, Chief Financial Officer
- Brenda Griffin, Director of Professional Development
- Bronwyn Gogia, Director of Assessment & Screening
- Cheryl Carpenter, Director of Early Childhood Education

Presiding Officer; Secretary

Michele King presided as Chair of the meeting; Melanie Stefanowicz served as secretary of the meeting and kept the minutes. A quorum of the Board being present, Michele called the meeting to order at approximately 9:00am EDT.

Welcome & Public Comment

The Welcome and Public Comment agenda item was presented by Michele King and Bethany Quisenberry. No members of the public were present to provide comment; therefore, no formal action was taken or required.

Meeting Agenda & Adoption

The meeting agenda was presented and adopted as presented. No formal action was taken or required.

Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes

The September 5, 2025 Program Committee Meeting Minutes were presented for review. Upon a motion duly made by Amanda Thomas and seconded by Bethany Quisenberry, the minutes were unanimously approved as presented.

Program Services Department

Gilda Duran, Chief Programs Officer, presented Program Services updates, including School Readiness (SR), Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK), and Child Care Resource & Referral (CCR&R) data. Highlights included:

Waiting list totals of 744 households representing 1,115 children across the service area.

CCR&R requests for September 2025 totaling 205, including staff-entered and online submissions.

2025–2026 VPK applications received totaling 9,064, with 7,979 approved, 1,064 rejected, and 17 inactive.

A full discussion followed. No formal action was taken or required.

Early Childhood Education Department

Cheryl Carpenter, Director of Early Childhood Education, presented enrollment and performance updates, including:

- VPK enrollment totaling 6,724 children across Collier, Hendry, Glades, and Lee counties.
- School Readiness enrollment totaling 4,539 children across the service area.
- VPK Performance Metrics, including release of summer results, with no Summer POPS and one incomplete provider.
- CLASS observation updates, noting that observations are underway and most VPK classrooms are now eligible for assessment.
- Discussion of 4-cycle CLASS data entry requirements and report length considerations.

A full discussion followed. No formal action was taken or required.

Contracts and Professional Development

Brenda Griffin, Director of Contracts and Professional Development, provided updates on professional development and training opportunities, including:

- Ongoing ELC staff-led trainings such as Trauma-Informed Classrooms, Behavior Management, Challenging Behaviors, and ASQ in English and Spanish.
- Availability of MarcoPolo on-demand trainings covering social-emotional development, literacy, and math.
- Monthly “Connect with Your Class” and “Conecta con tu aula” virtual sessions.
- LENA Grow recruitment efforts, with a new cohort hosting 22 classrooms across 8 sites.
- New contracted providers for the fiscal year, including SR-only, VPK-only, and dual SR/VPK providers.

A full discussion followed. No formal action was taken or required.

Health and Safety Updates

Health and Safety updates were provided by Danna Breeden. A full discussion followed. No formal action was taken or required.

Assessment and Screenings

Bronwyn Gogia, Director of Assessment and Screening, presented updates including:

- Child Assessments using Teaching Strategies, with 64 providers completing assessments.
- VPK child assessment progress, noting that PM-1 was nearing completion with approximately 98% of children assessed.
- ASQ Child Screening results for August, including children scoring above cutoff, in the monitoring area, and below cutoff, with Individualized Learning Plans (ILPs) issued as appropriate.
- A full discussion followed. No formal action was taken or required.

Strategic Initiatives

Melanie M. Stefanowicz, Chief Executive Officer, provided updates on Strategic Initiatives, including:

- School Readiness and VPK reimbursement requirements and compliance expectations.

- Overview of the Hurricane Ian Disaster Relief Grant, including purpose, timeline (July 1, 2025 – June 30, 2028), eligible counties (Collier and Lee), and phased implementation approach.
- Quality Improvement initiatives under the Disaster Relief Grant, including continuity planning, mental health services, trauma-informed supports, and procurement planning.
- Children’s Week 2026 and the Celebration of the Hands event.

A full discussion followed. No formal action was taken or required.

New Business

The section, New Business , was presented. No formal action was taken or required.

Next Meeting Scheduled & Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at approximately 10:30 a.m. EDT. The next meeting was scheduled for February 6, 2026 at 9:00 a.m., with in person and virtual attendance options.

Respectfully submitted,

