

**Early Learning Coalition of Escambia County  
Board Meeting Minutes  
May 8, 2025, 10:00 a.m.  
Chair: Shannon Nickinson**

**Members in Attendance**

Shannon Nickinson	Roger Thompson	Paul Fetsko
Mona Jackson	Bambi Sealy	Craig Jones
Tammy Hicks	Shacondra Primm	Deborah Tucker
Cindy Kirk	Brian Wyer	Tarae Donaldson
Mary Ann Bickerstaff	Lindsey Cannon	Reginald Dogan

**Members Absent**

Edna Williams	Melissa Sidoti	Doug Brown
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**Public in Attendance**

None

**Staff in Attendance**

Bruce Watson	Dawn Engel	Nina Daniels
Bess Abernathy	Melissa Jennings	

**I. Welcome and Introduction**

Notification of this meeting of the Board of Directors was posted to the Coalition Public Calendar Board and sent to the Pensacola News Journal for publication on April 23, 2025. The meeting was called to order by Ms. Nickinson.

**II. Public Comments**

- a. None.

**III. Chair Opening Comments**

- a. **Approval of Consent Agenda: Meeting Agenda, Minutes of February 13, 2025, Financial Reports for January, February and March 2025**

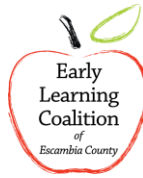
Upon a motion made by Mr. Thompson and seconded by Mr. Fetsko, the Meeting Agenda, Minutes of February 13, 2025, and financial reports for January, February and March 2025 were approved without objection.

**IV. Mr. Mansker's Farewell Presentation**

Unfortunately, Mr. Mansker was not able to attend. The Executive Director will take Mr. Mansker's service award to him.

**V. Executive Committee Report**

- a. **By-Laws and Board Member Attendance**



The By-Laws state that if a member misses three consecutive meetings in a Fiscal Year, it is at the discretion of the Chairperson if their position shall be declared vacant. Regarding attendance, the By-Laws do not differentiate between private sector and statutorily required members. This lack of differentiation will be addressed next time the By-Laws require revision for other reasons.

**b. Edna Williams Board Member Status**

Ms. Williams has not attended the last five meetings of the Board. No decision was made regarding her status as a member of the Board.

**c. Richard Wright Rolled Off the Board**

Richard Wright's second term ended February 13, 2025. Mr. Wright was not present to receive his service award in recognition of his contributions to the Coalition Board of Directors and the Escambia County community.

**d. Brian Wyer Board Member Approval**

Upon a motion made by the EXCOM and seconded by Ms. Donaldson, Mr. Wyers' appointment as a Director on the Board of the Early Learning Coalition was approved without objection.

**e. Tammy Hicks Nomination for Vice Chair and Continuation as Faith-based Rep.**

The EXCOM made the motion to nominate Tammy Hicks for Vice Chair of the Board of Directors and to have her remain the Faith-based representative for the remainder of her elected term. Upon the motion made by the EXCOM and seconded by Mr. Wyer, it was approved without objection to appoint Ms. Tammy Hicks as the Vice Chair and for Ms. Hicks to remain the Faith-based Representative through Fiscal Year 2025-2026.

**f. Anti-Fraud Plan, ELCEC 4101.1J and Benefit Recovery Procedure, ELCEC 4102.2B Approval**

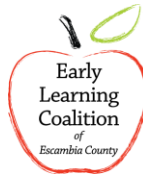
The EXCOM brings the yearly update of the Anti-Fraud Plan, and associated new Benefit Recovery Procedure, to the Board for approval. Upon the motion made by the EXCOM and seconded by Ms. Kirk, the Anti-Fraud Plan, ELCEC 4101.1J and Benefit Recovery Procedure, ELCEC 4102.2B were approved without objection.

**g. Warren Everett Resignation Letter**

Warren Averett sent a letter stating that they have decided to no longer have the Coalition as a client. They did not elaborate as to why they made this decision. It is possible that it was because of how the last three audits have been conducted and the greater scrutiny the Coalition has placed on their performance, or it could be the company decided to change which types of clients they want to serve.

**h. A-133 Audit for Fiscal Year 2023-2024 Presentation**

Due to Warren Averett ending their relationship with the Coalition, the Finance Director, Ms. Abernathy, presented the A-133 Audit for FY 2023-2024. There were no findings in this audit.



Upon a motion made by Ms. Nickinson and seconded by Ms. Bickerstaff, the A-133 Audit for FY 2023-2024 was accepted without objections.

**i. Audit and Tax Services RFP – Draft**

A draft of the Request For Proposals (RFP) for Audit and Tax Services to commence with Fiscal Year 2024-2025 has been prepared for review and approval. The Evaluation Committee will consist of Board members Ms. Nickinson, Mr. Thompson and Ms. Jackson, Finance Director, Ms. Abernathy and the Executive Director, Mr. Watson. The Operations Director, Ms. Engel, will serve as the recorder. Upon a motion made by Mr. Fetsko and seconded by Ms. Nickinson, the RFP for Audit and Tax services for FY 2024-2025 was approved without objection.

**j. Adding/Deleting the Board Chair to the Bank Account**

The bank requires formal Board approval to add or remove someone from the Coalition's account. The EXCOM recommends the Board approve the removal of the former Chair, Mr. Mansker, and adding the Interim Chair, Ms. Nickinson, to the account. Upon the motion made by Mr. Jones and seconded by Mr. Fetsko, it was approved without objection to remove Mr. Mansker and add Ms. Nickinson to the Coalition's checking account.

After this decision was made, the Finance Director, Ms. Abernathy requested approval of a signature stamp for Ms. Nickinson to the approval of the motion mentioned above. The motion to rescind the approval to remove Mr. Mansker and add Ms. Nickinson to the checking account was made by Mr. Fetsko and seconded by Mr. Jones and was approved without objection.

Upon a revised motion made by Mr. Jones and seconded by Mr. Fetsko, it was approved without objection to remove Mr. Mansker and to add Ms. Nickinson to the Coalition's checking account and to have a signature stamp made for Ms. Nickinson.

**VI. Executive Director's Report**

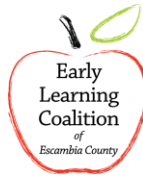
**a. Coalition Status Reports: DEL Invoice Dashboard for March 2025**

Through March the Coalition spent \$12.3 million of the \$17.9 million SR grant, which is 68.6%. SR Admin was 3.0%, Non-direct was 18.7% and Quality was 9.5%. VPK Services was \$3.8 million of \$4.8 million which is 79.1%. VPK Admin was 2.2%.

**b. Coalition Status Reports: Enrollment/Wait List Status Report, and Contracting Summary Report**

There are 2,523 children enrolled in the School Readiness program of which 54 are SRMAT and 945 are school-age children. The BG8 Econ Wait List has been cleared. There are 120 children on the SRMAT Wait List.

There are 1,550 children enrolled for the VPK 2024-2025 School Year Program and 1,038 are approved for 2025-2026.



There are 80 SR Providers, and 72 VPK Providers.

## **VII. Old Business**

### **a. SR Fiscal Year 2024-2025 Funding Update**

#### **1) Reob/Deob Request 6FEB25 – New NOA March 7, 2025**

The additional funding the Coalition received on December 5, 2024, for Wait List Reduction did not address the Coalition's funding shortfall for the QPI and Gold Seal Programs. On February 4, 2025, the DEL advised all Coalitions to take steps necessary to balance their budgets with the funding they currently had and to not expect or count on funding to cover the QPI and GS short falls. Through the Reob/Deob Request process, the Coalition requested either \$506,605 in overall SR Funding or \$63,840 for Gold Seal and \$442,756 for QPI. The new NOA issued on March 7, 2025, awarded the Coalition \$537,130 in SR funding and \$25,014 in Gold Seal funding, with instructions to use the SR Non-direct quality funding to cover any shortfalls in QPI and Gold Seal funding.

#### **2) Reob/Deob Request 6FEB25 Impact of QPI/GS Shortfall**

Last week, the DEL requested input from Coalitions for another round of Reob/Deob. Because the state budget is not yet finalized, many Coalitions are reluctant to Deob any SR funds as this may establish a new reduced funding level for determining allocations for next year. The DEL understands this and asked for Gold Seal Reob/Deob requests and Deob inputs for Special Needs and VPK. Our Coalition requested \$27,000 additional funds for Gold Seal, and offered to Deob all \$94,374 allocated for Special Needs, \$50,000 of regular VPK funding and \$5,000 of unused VPK assessment funding.

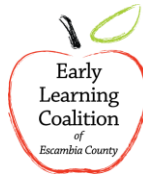
### **b. Provider Arrested, SR Contract Terminations and Impact on Families**

The owner of two facilities, Blessed Our Children and Me and All My Children, was arrested on March 5, 2025, for suspected money laundering. Her home, both child care facilities and another business were raided, and files and computers were confiscated. The owner was released on bail that same day. The owner decided to surrender her two DCF licenses and self-terminate both of her SR contracts. It is suspected this was done to prevent DCF from suspending her license and the Coalition subsequently terminating her SR contracts and making her ineligible for providing SR services for five years. This case is still pending.

## **VIII. New Business**

### **a. Board of County Commissioner designee – Deanna Oleske**

After the EXCOM last met, the Coalition received a letter from the Board of County Commissioner designating Ms. Deanna Oleske as their appointee to the Board. The letter stated that the Board of County Commissioners confirmed the appointment of Deanna Oleske as its designee on January 9, 2025. The meeting scheduled for 2025 and the invitation to today's



Board meeting was sent to Ms. Oleske, but a response was not received. Approval of Ms. Oleske's appointment to the Board will be added to the agenda of the August 2025 Board meeting.

**b. Legislative Session 2025**

The two major topics from the current legislative session are good news and possibly not so good news. The good news is that the criteria to qualify for the School Readiness Program is changing from 150% of FPL to 55% of SMI. This closes the gap in eligibility for single parents with 1-3 children that was created by Florida increasing its' minimum wage. The possible not so good news is that the legislature is contemplating reducing SR funding this year. The legislature still has not settled on a budget for the coming year. The current version under consideration does not fund SR at the levels as last year. Updates to follow as this issue develops.

**c. SR Fiscal Year 2025-26 Funding Projections**

Projections are provided for the SR program for Fiscal Year 2025-2026. One assumption is the year starts at the same level of funding as currently provided. A second projection is added for what additional funding would do for enrollments. These projections will have to be revised once the state budget is finalized, and Coalition allocations are published.

**d. DOE Single Sign On (SSO) Transition**

To meet cybersecurity requirements the DOE has made changes to how all users of DOE electronic systems access their accounts and use the DOE systems. This has required great effort on the part of the DEL and the Coalitions to get everyone, ELC staff, providers and parents, into the new Single Sign On system. There are still errors and problems that are being worked on to make this system work for all users.

**e. Staff Issues**

Two staff members have had medical issues that have kept them out of work for over a month and will keep them out at least until the end of May. Both have applied for Short-Term Disability benefits.

**IX. Audits and Reviews in Progress.**

**a. DEL Desk Review 2 for 2024-25**

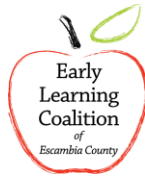
The Desk Review is complete.

**b. DEL Accountability Review**

The Accountability Review is in process. The Exit Conference will be on May 20, 2025.

**c. DEL Finance Review**

The Finance Review is currently on going.



**X. Adjourn**

The meeting was adjourned at 11:37 a.m.

**Next Meeting: Thursday, August 14, 2025, at 10:00 a.m. at the Early Learning Coalition offices at 1720 West Fairfield Dr., Suite 100/400, Pensacola, FL 32501**