

<b>ITEM #:</b>	<a href="#">Amendment</a> - B214RB1 / Board
<b>MEETING:</b>	Board
<b>MEETING DATE:</b>	4/12/2021
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>Book Club for Families with Young Children – Broward Bookworms, updated</b>
<b>FOR ACTION:</b>	Yes
<b>RECOMMENDED ACTION:</b>	<a href="#">Approve a contract with Scholastic, Inc.</a>
<b>FINANCIAL IMPACT:</b>	Up to \$500,000
<b>AS RECOMMENDED BY:</b>	Program Review Committee/Finance Committee
<b>ELC STAFF LEADS</b>	Howard Bakalar/Christine Klima

### **Background**

The global pandemic has caused instability for so many. With the fear of catching COVID-19 coupled with job loss, food insecurity, and a pretty endless list of other pandemic related issues, many families have chosen to keep their children home from preschool through the pandemic, even after most of the preschools reopened. Through the lens of the Early Learning Coalition, we know that, more than 6 months after the start of the school year, approximately 1,400 of our School Readiness children are not attending, and compared to a normal year, our VPK attendance is down by more than 3,400 children.

At the last Executive Committee meeting, board members discussed this very serious issue, worried about the very real possibility of learning loss across both our early childhood spectrum and across the entire K-12 spectrum. ELC staff was challenged to bring programming to the Program Review Committee that could in some way help combat learning loss occurring across the early childhood population.

### **Current Status**

ELC staff have engaged in various conversation internally and with community partners regarding efforts to combat learning loss potentially related to the impact of COVID-19. One concept proposed is. Broward Bookworms.

### ***Concept:***

ELC staff is proposing to coordinate a Broward Bookworms for Broward families with children age 0-5. Packets of books and accompanying activities based on the book themes would be mailed directly from a large publisher/distributor of children's books to the families' home addresses. We will make every effort to ensure these books packets respect and reflect the racial, ethnic, and language diversity of our community. ELC education staff, as well as prominent members of our community, would then lead scheduled online activities including "read-a-longs," and modeling the activities listed in the mailers.

### ***Communication:***

We would advertise this opportunity through multiple venues, including print ads and social media, and would also rely on our community partners, especially the partners involved in the Broward Reads initiative, to spread the word. Interested families would be directed to the ELC's website, where sign-up would be formatted in a way where information, including mailing information and language preference, would be easily obtainable. As what we hope would be an added benefit to the families, if they agree to allow us to continue to send them helpful information about early childhood development, etc., we would put them on our mailing list. Additionally, if they agree to share their information with our Broward Reads partners, this could hopefully create a continuum from successful early reader to successful elementary and beyond reader.

***Tested Model:***

Luckily, we are able to model the ELC's Broward Bookworms after the School District's successful program. Our partners at the Early Learning Language Acquisition Dept. at Broward County Schools organized almost exactly the same project for families of children age pre-k through 2<sup>nd</sup> grade attending Title 1 Schools.

***Estimating the Interest***

While the School District did not need to broadly estimate the number of families attending pre-K through 2<sup>nd</sup> grade in Title 1 Schools, our estimate of the number of families that would take advantage of this reading opportunity is much more broad. Based on data from the American Community Survey from 2019, there were 169,831 Broward households with children under the age of 18. Of those, 19.4% of those households had children age 6 and under. So, approximately 32,000 families with children under 6 years old living in Broward. While we can't predict the exact percentage of families that will register to receive books, we feel relatively confident that number would not exceed 25,000. Based on this demographic data and the price estimates drawn from the bid submitted to Broward County School District for a very similar project, staff estimates the cost of purchasing/ mailing kits to approach, but not exceed \$500,000.

***Partnership Potential***

The ELC will take every opportunity to promote the major partners in early childhood literacy, including the Children's Services Council and the Broward Reads Initiative and its members, in the rollout and possible continuation of this project. We will include multiple agency/initiative logos and information, and will share registration information, if at all possible.

***Timeline***

The School District was able to roll this program out in approximately two months, from program concept to first mailing. Unfortunately, because of the cost involved for this project, the ELC must procure a vendor to supply and distribute book and activity packets. Because the procurement must be available to the public for a minimum of ten days, the ELC has begun the procurement process based on preliminary approval of both the program concept and the projected project cost. Once a selection has been made, we anticipate a swift contract negotiation, followed by four weeks of communications outreach and family registration. We expect books can be mailed to families by mid-June.

[The deadline to submit a quote was at noon Friday, April 9<sup>th</sup>. We received one quote from Scholastic, the same vendor that provided book packets for the School District. ELC staff is now posting its Notice of Intent to Award to Sole Applicant on its website, and procurement will officially close Friday.](#)

**Committee Review**

This project concept has been reviewed by, and approved by the Program Review Committee, and the estimated cost by the Finance Committee.

**Recommendation**

[Staff recommends the board approve a contract with Scholastic not to exceed \\$500,000 for book and accompanying activity packets to Broward's families with young children, subject to both the Notice of Award and successful contract negotiation.](#)