



Approved September 5, 2025, Program Review Committee Meeting
Early Learning Coalition of Broward County, Inc.
Program Review Committee Meeting Minutes
May 20, 2025, at 1:00 PM
Zoom Meeting

Members in Attendance	Chair, Maria Hernandez; Krystie Castillo; Amy Hauser; Renee Podolsky; Ellie Schrot
Members Absent (Excused)	Laurie Sallarulo; Cindy Arenberg-Seltzer; Dawn Liberta
Members Absent (Unexcused)	
Staff in Attendance	Renee Jaffe, CEO; Christine Klima, CAO; Howard Bakalar, CPO; Hubert Cesar, CIO; Melody Martinez, Board Liaison; Amy Moore, Sr. Director of Family Services and Provider Relations; Allison Metsch, Sr. Director of Education & Quality; Ancel Pratt, III, Sr. Director of Communications & Outreach
Others in Attendance	Traci Schweitzer

Item	Action/Discussion
Welcome & Call to Order	Chair Maria Hernandez called the meeting to order at 1:06 PM. The roll was called, and a quorum was established.
Consent Agenda 1. Approve March 3, 2025, Committee meeting minutes	There was a Motion to move the Consent Agenda by Ellie Schrot and Seconded by Amy Hauser. Unanimously approved. Motion Passes.
Regular Committee 1. PRC254RB1 - School Readiness Enrollment/Redetermination Update (Goal 1 of Strategic Plan)	<p>School Readiness</p> <p>Amy Moore provided an update on School Readiness enrollment and redetermination efforts. Since the last Program Review Committee meeting, the Department of Education's Single Sign-On (SSO) update on March 20 caused a significant state-level system disruption. While downtime was expected to last one day, the EFS MOD portal remained unstable for more than two weeks. During this period, daily call volume doubled, in-office traffic increased, and several deadlines were extended. Despite these challenges, 476 new children were enrolled in Q3, and 386 in April, positioning us for a strong Q4.</p> <p>As of May 8, 2025, the wait time from application approval to funding notification is just under two months. The May 7 waitlist pull included applications approved through March 19, with 856 children currently on the list. Q3 attrition averaged 25%, with 75% of the 5,316 children due for redetermination remaining in service. A new survey launched in March is collecting feedback from families who lost services to identify opportunities for process improvements.</p> <p>SR PLUS enrollment stands at 26 children, with Broward continuing to rank among the top coalitions statewide. Families are also being transitioned from the Vulnerable</p>

	<p>Population program into School Readiness as CSC has approved additional child care funding.</p> <p>Looking ahead, recent legislation will raise the School Readiness income eligibility threshold to 55% of the State Median Income (about \$53,000 for a family of four), and new co-payment rules will take effect. Enrollment strategies will be adjusted to align with these policy changes.</p> <p>Chair Maria Hernandez inquired about the percentage of families unable to complete their redetermination due to incomplete submissions and asked what efforts are in place to assist them in completing their applications.</p> <p>Amy reported that the organization operates a full-service call center, receiving 350–600 calls daily, with trained customer service specialists assisting parents with redeterminations over the phone. In-person support is also available through trained family services staff. Outreach efforts include email alerts, text messages, and phone calls, with a minimum of three contact attempts per family (at least one by phone), often exceeding this minimum. Data shows that most terminations involve school-aged children rather than those aged 0–5, and many families leaving no longer require services.</p> <p>Krystie Castillo inquired about the appropriate DCF contact for parents seeking referrals for families in need of immediate assistance. Amy responded that the case must involve an open abuse or neglect investigation through DCF, and the DCF protective investigator determines which services should be assigned to the child.</p>
2. PRC254RB2- VPK Enrollment Update (Goal 2 of Strategic Plan)	<p>VPK Enrollment</p> <p>Amy Moore provided updates on VPK. As of May 9, 2025, 14,319 school-year VPK applications and 366 summer applications have been approved for the 2024–2025 program year, with 12,753 students currently enrolled—just shy of the State’s estimate of 12,815 participants.</p> <p>The Broward County School District has opened applications for the 2025 VPK Summer Bridge program, a statewide initiative for children needing additional support for kindergarten readiness. The 24-day program (100 instructional hours) runs June–July and serves children who scored below the 10th percentile on PM3 or were designated as “assessment inappropriate,” “failed practice,” or “non-English speaker.”</p> <p>For the 2025–2026 program year, 8,037 school-year VPK applications and 64 summer VPK applications have been approved to date, keeping pace with last year’s totals.</p>
3. PRC254RB3- Education/Quality (Goals 3 and 4 of Strategic Plan)	<p>Education & Quality:</p> <p>Allison Metsch reported on Education and Quality. The Early Learning Coalition hosted its first in-person early childhood conference since the pandemic at Boyd H. Anderson High School on February 22, 2025. The event was a great success, with approximately 560 attendees, 25 workshops presented by ELC education staff and community partners, and 14 vendor tables. Key partnerships included the Department of Health</p>
a. Help Me Grow Florida Update	

<p>b. CLASS update (School Readiness and VPK)</p> <p>c. VPK Progress Monitoring Update and</p> <p>d. Analysis of technology vendors' Impact to Date</p>	<p>(Vaccinations, KidCare, Tobacco Prevention), Early Steps, Children's Services Council, and The Journey Institute, among others. The event received overwhelmingly positive feedback, thanks in large part to the enthusiasm and hard work of ELC staff across multiple departments. Special thanks were extended to Laurie Sallarulo for speaking and to the board members who attended.</p> <p>Renee Podolsky thanked Allison and shared that her staff had expressed positive feedback and appreciated the opportunity to participate.</p> <p>Help Me Grow Florida</p> <p>Help Me Grow Florida has hired a Care Coordinator, meeting contractual staffing requirements. The new staff member has completed training and onboarding. The program has begun participating in outreach events, including School Resource Fairs, Countdown to Kindergarten, and monthly Community Care Corner sessions for families attending health appointments. The first "Books, Balls, and Blocks" developmental screening event was scheduled for May 15 at the Walter C. Young Resource Center in Pembroke Pines, with a second event planned for June.</p> <p>CLASS (Classroom Assessment Scoring System) Update</p> <p>School Readiness</p> <p>As required by the Division of Early Learning, all ELCs use the CLASS (Classroom Assessment Scoring System) tool to assess School Readiness (SR) providers with more than 20% SR enrollment or a CLASS 1 violation. The tool measures teacher-child interactions and classroom management, with 50% of each care level observed. Providers receive a composite score between 1 and 7; those scoring below 4.0 cannot contract with the ELC.</p> <p>To date, 966 of approximately 1,000 SR observations have been completed, with a current countywide average score of 5.51.</p> <p>Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten (VPK)</p> <p>Since July 2022, the Division of Early Learning has required all VPK classrooms, including public-school classes, to be observed using the CLASS tool during both the school year and summer. While no payment differential is tied to VPK CLASS scores, all classrooms are observed. To date, 831 of approximately 900 observations have been completed, and all scores are expected to be finalized on time. The current countywide VPK CLASS average is 5.59.</p> <p>VPK Performance Accountability Update</p> <p>The new VPK provider progress monitoring system holds providers accountable for delivering quality instruction that supports children's growth and readiness for kindergarten. School-year programs assess students three times using the Florida Assessment of Student Thinking (FAST) Star Early Literacy: PM1 (first 30 days), PM2 (midyear), and PM3 (final 30 days). Summer programs assess at the beginning (PM1) and end (PM3). These assessments guide programs in directing resources to support students prior to kindergarten.</p> <p>A school's designation is based on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality Classroom Instruction – CLASS Composite Program Assessment Score (50%)
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4. PRC254RB4-
Outreach/Advocacy Update

- **Child Achievement** – Percentage of children demonstrating kindergarten readiness on PM3 (20%)

Learning Gains – Growth of 12+ points from PM1 to PM3 (30%)

Using 2022–2023 VPK data for reference, the majority of schools met or exceeded expectations, with higher CLASS scores correlating with higher program designations.

Learning Technology Update

As reported at the last three PRC meetings, the ELC contracted with Age of Learning, Inc. and Marco Polo Learning to enhance VPK children’s learning. Analysis of Progress Monitoring 1 (first 30 days) and Progress Monitoring 2 (midyear) data shows that VPK sites using either vendor’s tools scored higher than sites using neither. Sites utilizing Marco Polo materials demonstrated the most successful results. The FAST Star Early Literacy is scored on a Unified Scaled Score (USS) from 200–1100, with a score of 707 or higher at PM3 indicating kindergarten readiness.

Ellie Schrot noted she is unfamiliar with the differences between PM1, PM2, and PM3 and suggested creating a “cheat sheet” for the next meeting. Allison agreed.

Amy Hauser asked if there has been any consideration of implementing a uniform monitoring approach to ensure consistency, noting that some directors felt they were scored differently depending on the assessor. Allison responded that to be a CLASS assessor, one must score within a set percentage of the master code. She added that the team conducts frequent double-coding to ensure that different assessors observe and score consistently.

Outreach/Advocacy Update

Ancel Pratt provided an update on outreach and Advocacy.

The Communications and Outreach team has intensified efforts to promote VPK enrollment, with the goal of exceeding the VPK Estimating Conference enrollment target for Broward County.

The team has continued strategic advocacy to highlight early learning funding needs and helped organize the upcoming State of Child Care event to engage municipal leaders and local stakeholders supporting ELC’s match program.

Digital Advertising & Outreach

- **School Readiness (SR):** Paid advertising resumed in late April 2025, helping to generate 15,298 landing page visitors.
- **VPK:** In April 2025, VPK landing page views reached 13,943, supported by \$800 in paid ads, comparable to April 2024’s \$971 spend.

Legislative Advocacy

Launched an advocacy campaign in Dec. 2024 highlighting historical underfunding, including a presentation to the Broward Legislative Delegation with a clear funding goal.

	<p>Senate budget proposal includes ELC Broward’s requested \$110M base SR allocation; House proposed \$104M, both above last year’s \$88M.</p> <p>Despite a proposed \$60–80M statewide SR budget reduction, Broward is set to receive the largest increase statewide due to strong performance and advocacy.</p> <p>ELC staff met with legislators during Children’s Week to express appreciation and request continued support in final budget negotiations.</p> <p>Maria Hernandez noted that the greatest return on investment has been observed from grocery store posters and gas pump television advertisements. While these options are more expensive, she emphasized that the return is significantly higher.</p>
Unfinished Business	
New Business	Howard Bakalar announced that “A Day in K” will be held on June 4 at MODS and encouraged attendance. Allison shared that the Provider Appreciation Meeting will take place tomorrow.
Matters from the Chair	None
Matters from the Committee	None
Public Comments	None
Next Meeting	<u>TBD</u>
Adjourn	The meeting adjourned at 1:52 PM by Ellie Schrot

These minutes contain the action items of the Board meeting of the Early Learning Coalition of Broward. They do not include all of the Committee’s discussions or comments on each matter or issue raised during the meeting. A tape recording of the meeting is held in the Coalition office. Corrections from the Committee will be taken before approval at the next meeting.