



## BOARD OF DIRECTORS RETREAT

### APPROVED MINUTES

Saturday, June 8, 2024, at 9:00 am  
6302 E. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd., Suite 100  
Tampa, FL 33619

#### MEETING ATTENDANCE

**Facilitator:** Aakash Patel, Chair

#### Board Members Present:

Aakash Patel, Rebecca Bacon, Dr. Daira Barakat, Tracye H. Brown, Gino Casanova, Annette Eberhart, Dr. Lise Fox, Dr. Daphne Fudge, Adam Giery, Amanda Jae, Dr. Jacquelyn Jenkins, Commissioner Gwendolyn Myers, Allison Nguyen, Beth Pasek, Dr. Shawn Robinson, Michelle Zieziula, and Derek Zitko

#### Board Members Absent:

Dr. Larissa Baia, Dr. Jodi Marshall, and Chantal Porte

#### ELCHC Staff:

Dr. Fred Hicks, Nancy Will, Gary Meyer, Sabrina Ruiz, Alison Fraga, Rick Rampersad

#### Other Attendees:

Frazier Carraway, and Dennis Hebert

#### CALL TO ORDER

##### Quorum Verification

Noting a quorum had been established, Chair Patel called the meeting to order at 8:53 am.

Chair Patel welcomed everyone to the Early Learning Coalition of Hillsborough County Board of Directors Retreat 2024.

The Board of Directors introduced themselves stating their names, titles and shared how long they have served on the board and why they serve.

Ms. Wick introduced herself and the work that she has done with other early learning coalitions throughout the state of Florida, sharing her experiences as a chief executive officer before becoming a consultant and including her work in the fundraising world.

#### PUBLIC COMMENT I

No, public comment I.

#### Roles & Responsibilities

##### A. Board Survey

Ms. Wick presented an overview of the board survey results and laid out different structures of board and CEO governing. Ms. Wick highlighted:

1. Board of Directors that hold too much power where the CEO takes a back seat
2. CEO has too much power and the Board of Directors takes a back seat

Ms. Wick shared the best practice is for the Board of Directors to do annual assessments both on the individual board member level as well as the board as a whole.



Ms. Wick asked how many board members had joined Dr. Hicks on one of his recent visits to a provider center. Ms. Wick shared that for the board of directors to feel more involved and to gain a better understanding of the interworking of the provider side as well as the CEO and staff side it would be highly recommended that board members join Dr. Hicks on one of his weekly visits.

There was board member conversation and suggestions that would clarify the inside workings of the coalition in gaining a better understanding of each department and the complexity of the work being done.

Board Suggestions:

- Reporting at committee meetings and board meetings go back to being led by coalition staff to have some interaction with leadership at all levels and to ask some deeper questions on what initiatives and programs being brought forward for approval by the board.
- The financial reporting aligns more closely with the mission statement so that the work of the coalition is seen more clearly geared toward fiduciary responsibility of funding.
- "Palm card" summary and/or helpful definitions of the mission and goals of the coalition along with data points to be able to speak to when board members are out in the community
- Recognition of staff members at board meetings so that the relationships between staff that execute the decisions of the board under Dr. Hicks's leadership can be visible and appreciated

Ms. Wick opened the floor to the discussion of another question from the board survey.

Do I read and understand financial statements?

There was board discussion not having a complete understanding of the financial statements and reports as presented at committee and board meetings.

Board Suggestions:

- Gary Meyer, Chief Financial Officer to sit down with Finance committee members individually or as a committee to review the financial statements and reports. So that finance committee members can better explain the financials at different committee meetings as well as board meetings to those who have questions.
- Small group trainings with Mr. Meyer and perhaps one or two people on his team to lead these trainings for all board of directors' members
- Having a board of directors' member serve on the Finance Committee that does not have a finance background to help those board members who also do not have a finance background

Ms. Wick shared that most board of directors in her experience usually do not have a complete understanding of finance and reporting. Ms. Wick also explained that non-profit organizations have some of the most difficult accounting to understand, especially for those without any type of financial background.

Ms. Wick opened the floor to the discussion of another question from the board survey.

Do you prepare for and participate in board meetings and committee meetings?

Ms. Wick shared the results of 94% of board members stating they do prepare and 4.4% reported not preparing for meetings.

Ms. Wick shared the result of the survey question...

Do you find serving on the ELCHC Board of Directors satisfying and rewarding?

There was board discussion on believing strongly in the mission and pillars of the organization and desiring to play a part in helping to educate the youngest learners in the county.

Board Suggestions & Highlights:

- Dr. Hicks does a great job in presenting his CEO reports at every committee meeting and board meeting to keep members informed on the happenings of the coalition internally and externally i.e. Day of Play events, Teacher's Night Out, etc..
- Board minutes to be e-mailed out within two weeks of a board meeting
- Too many e-mails are sent out
- Outlook calendar invites/planners serve as a better form of communication with the board of directors in being able to keep up with meetings, events, etc..
- Desire to see more of the public facing social media interviews, and coalition awareness campaigns that are out in the community
- The desire to get to know board members better was expressed.
- Outlook calendars should be sent a month in advance of any events that the coalition is putting on in the community so that board members can participate if available.

Alison Fraga, Chief Development Officer shared that the coalition does send out a newsletter via e-mail and that all board of directors should be receiving this monthly. Mrs. Fraga also reported that all interviews done by Dr. Hicks and Chair Patel are immediately posted on all the social media platforms that the coalition has including Facebook, the coalition's website, as well as on "X" formerly known as Twitter and LinkedIn.

Board attorney, Frazier Carraway shared that due to the Sunshine law it is not easy for board members to meet up and get to know each other as desired because it would be considered a board meeting and would need to be publicly notified and scheduled.

Ms. Wick lead a discussion on board members sharing a compelling vision for the organization's future especially with American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) dollars sunseting on June 30, 2024 and new challenges that providers may be facing.

There was discussion on board members taking responsibility to learn as much as possible about the mission and pillars of the organization so that improvements could be made on an individual level as well as the entire board of directors.

There was continued board discussion on truly understanding the ins and outs of the coalition and the early education space from every perspective from the educator in the classrooms, to the owners of the centers, the legislators and lawmakers that set policies, procedures and budget to the staff of the ELCHC and the work that is done in background to ensure everything is running as smoothly as possible.

Ms. Wick posed the question of whether the Board of Directors would like to have a strategic plan to accomplish the things that had been mentioned.

The board discussed the different committees and what questioned what committee addresses some of the issues that were being discussed.

Amanda Jae, Chair of the Service Delivery & Efficiency Committee shared that her committee does invite providers to the table to discuss opportunities and challenges they are facing as well as their many successes. Mrs. Jae also reported that staff regularly attend her meetings to give updates on all the community engagement and activities that are scheduled.

Ms. Wick shared that a healthy board of directors is one that gets more strategic and are aligned with goals, strategies and objectives.

There was board discussion about alignment in strategy from the CEO to the board members and what they may look like moving forward as the coalition has now moved passed some major hurdles that it had to overcome the last few years.

The Board of Directors had a lengthy conversation on having unscripted workshops to be able to discuss strategy, ideas, current trends in early education, etc..in an informal setting focused on more strategy, planning and the sharing of ideas for the future of the coalition, its mission and goals.

## **B. How can I serve?**

Ms. Wick opened the floor to Dr. Fred Hicks, CEO of ELCHC, for his presentation.

### **CEO Support**

Dr. Hicks read through the mission and pillars of the coalition reminding board members what the mission of the organization should mean to everyone who serves. Dr. Hicks thanked everyone for their attendance and expressed his gratitude for their continued support in serving the youngest learners in Hillsborough County.

Dr. Hicks invited all board members to join him on one of his weekly visits to providers to meet the teachers, owners and students of the centers the board regularly makes decisions that affect everyone involved.

Dr. Hicks shared that the coalition serves around 9,000-10,000 students who test at around 70% ready for kindergarten. Dr. Hicks explained that getting ready for kindergarten is important and shared there are study after study showing the importance and impact of early education on the life of a child. Dr. Hicks also shared early education is not just about learning site words, or learning numbers it is about having an adult believe in you and invest time in you so that a young child can begin to see themselves as valuable.

Dr. Hicks reported The Children's Board of Hillsborough County recently committed \$1 million dollars to serve children who are above the 150% of the federal poverty level. Dr. Hicks also reported that the state legislator may be providing an additional \$30 million to be divided amongst all 30 early learning coalitions in the state of Florida however, this was not finalized.

Dr. Hicks also reported that helping with children with unique abilities is high on the priority list and is working with possible partnerships with Suncoast Credit Union, the United Way, and others as the additional funds requested by coalitions did not make it to the governor's desk but died in committee.

Dr. Hicks explained the eligibility cliff with an example of an hourly waged parent receiving a small increase of \$1.00 an hour and that increase causing him to fall over the eligibility cliff therefore no longer able to receive the services the coalition provides.

There was board discussion on the different partnerships the coalition has historically had with other early education/education organizations throughout the community.

Rebecca Bacon, Executive Director of the Children's Board of Hillsborough County explained how the Children's Board determines the need for the different organizations that apply for funding. Mrs. Bacon also shared with the board the different serves and ways the Children's Board supports children and their families.

There was board discussion on the differences between Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) and School Readiness (SR). Dr. Hicks presented the differences between the two programs.

There was discussion around the Young Children Summit and how the Summit was an idea that Dr. Hicks brought to the table as he stepped into the role of CEO of the ELCHC. Discussion continued as the Summit is not a fundraising event but more of an educational Summit for business leaders in the Hillsborough Community and stressing the importance of working families through the education of the youngest learners in the county.

There was a question if there was an annual report produced from the ELCHC with a snapshot of all the finances and initiatives that are approved by the board.

Dr. Hicks shared with the board that the annual report is posted on the ELCHC website every year in full transparency of every cent that is spent.

#### Board Suggestions:

- To have the annual packet available at the Young Children Summit this year
- To have staff and leadership at the tables for discussion that are familiar with early education to ward off ideas or suggestions that early education professionals know will not be fruitful

There was board discussion on the gaps of the board of directors, and the seats available both governor appointed and private sector regular seats. The discussion included:

- Candidates that have a financial background, leadership from local financial institutions

Board Request:

- Sending out an Outlook calendar invite to the full board with a note that registration is required to have a seat at the table for the Young Children's Summit

**Break**

**Who do you know?**

**A. Board Make-Up**

Ms. Wick shared that 90% of organizations funded primarily with government money tend to have a negative outside public appearance and are seen as a government pass through, unfortunately. Ms. Wick also shared that those in the early education space know and understand the services provided by the ELCHC and all ELC nationwide are to help end the cycle of public assistance by allowing mom and dad the opportunity to work. Ms. Wick shared that the example Dr. Hicks gave of the working family that would lose services due to a small hourly bump in pay continues to hit children of color and their families the hardest.

Ms. Wick shared with the board that she has extensive experience in raising money and has been asked to help in raising money for various organizations.

Ms. Wick posed the following questions to the board of directors for thoughts around fundraising:

1. Do you have the confidence and knowledge to be able to share the mission and purpose of the services that the ELCHC provides to potential financial donors?
2. Who do you know with deep pockets that has a vested interest in early education that may not be aware that they should have a vested interest in early education?
3. Who needs to hear this message?
4. Is there anyone not comfortable with asking?

Ms. Wick shared a personal experience with her daughter and son-in-law who works in ministry at a church not making a large salary. Ms. Wick shared that her daughter was not able to find childcare in her area for less than \$1800.00 a month and that her son-in-law at one point thought he might need to stop working to care for their child. Ms. Wick shared her family's story is not too different from millions of American families nationwide. Ms. Wick posed the question; who does not want to work to support their family? Ms. Wick stated that parents by and large desire to care for their own families and childcare has a heavy price tag that many families cannot afford.

Ms. Wick reported there are billions of donated dollars every year. Ms. Wick stated it is important to get the message across as to why is the ELCHC the best investment. Ms. Wick also shared that 90% of fundraising is the why question.

Ms. Wick gave an example of the program D.A.R.E. she stated the why question was answered, to prevent young children and teens from doing drugs. Ms. Wick shared that the highest rate of drug use was found to be among children who had graduated from the D.A.R.E. program yet millions and millions of dollars were raised because people/corporations bought into the why.

Ms. Wick asked the board members to write a list of 5 companies or people the coalition should invite to the Young Children Summit and asked for some to share the companies and or people they had written down.

Ms. Wick asked who the largest employers are in Hillsborough County.

There was board response included the BayCare system with 29,000 employees, Hillsborough County Schools, Wal-Mart, Publix grocery, Tampa Bay Lighting, PNC Bank, Suncoast Credit Union, Amazon, etc.. Ms. Wick asked which of these companies does not understand the impact of early education as a vehicle for parents showing up to work day in and day out? Ms. Wick also asked are these companies being invited to the table of discussion on the importance of early education.

Ms. Wick reported that based on the board matrix there is a gap for folks under the age of 35 and how important it is to gain the perspective of different generations.

Ms. Wick asked that board members think about their replacement and consider starting a dialogue with someone who might be interested in taking their place who is passionate about education and understands the significance of early education for the betterment of society.

## **PUBLIC COMMENT II**

No, public comment II.

## **NEXT STEPS**

- Setting up workshops
- New committee for the financial education of the board of directors

Ms. Wick asked each board member to share their biggest takeaways from the board retreat.

Chair Patel shared that a workshop could be scheduled for August or September to get started on the implementation of some of the ideas shared.

Chair Patel asked the board about the best date for the next board retreat. There was board discussion that a Friday would work out best.

Chair Patel thanked Ms. Carol Wick for her facilitation of the board retreat.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

Chair Patel asked for a motion to adjourn citing no further discussion.

*Dr. Shawn Robinson made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 11.45 pm. Commissioner Myers made a second. The motion carried unanimously.*

## **LUNCH (Reflection)**

Read and approved by: Aakash Patel 08/26/24

Aakash Patel, *Chairman of the ELCHC Board of Directors*

*DATE*

Signature:   
Aakash Patel (Aug 26, 2024 15:49 EDT)

Email: aakash@elevate-inc.com

# June 2024 Board of Directors Retreat Meeting Minutes\_Approved

Final Audit Report

2024-08-26

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