

**The Broward Reads Coalition-Campaign for Grade Level Reading
Meeting Minutes
December 17, 2020**

9:30 a.m.

Meeting conducted via Zoom

I. Welcome and Introductions

The meeting was called to order at 9:36 a.m.

II. Updates

a) Early Learning Coalition (Renee Jaffe)

Renee Jaffe reported that ELC Broward received nearly \$10 million to enroll children from their waitlist which was at 3,400 in July. The hope is to enroll approximately 1,900 children. Roughly 215 children have been enrolled thus far. The school readiness program (the childcare subsidy program for low income families) still has low attendance (approximately 83%) for birth to four-year-old and some school aged children that are attending. There are still some school-aged children funded through ELC who are attending full-time while they attend school via virtual learning.

First-responder & Medical Personnel Program: This program will begin being phased out on December 31st but will continue over the next three months as the phase out continues.

VPK Enrollment: Enrollment is still ongoing but actual enrollment remains low despite there being upwards of 15,000 applications (actual enrollment is approximately 10,00 which is a 32% decrease when compared to last year). Renee shared that State actuaries reported recently that enrollment is anticipated to be about 59% of 4-year olds for this year compared to the typical 76%. There is an active outreach campaign for VPK this year, so the hope is that we'll see positive change in January.

Ms. Jaffe shared that a request will be made of OEL to see if they will allow the Coalitions to continue to reimburse VPK providers beyond the school year and into the summer as an extension of the school year program.

VPK Flex Program: The state approved extending virtual VPK which currently has about 50 programs participating.

A discussion ensued about learning loss being experienced by children particularly in the VPK and Kindergarten age groups. Dan Gohl (BCPS) shared that kindergarten students have been flagged as the having the highest rate of learning loss of all grade levels.

Cindy Arenberg Seltzer (CSC) stated the CSC is committed to supporting BCPS assist these students to achieve reading mastery all the literacy programs funded by the CSC. If there is need for more support in the next school year, more resources can be put in where necessary. Dan Gohl suggested that an effort should be made to get major institutional players to require municipalities to include a reading element for the next round of CARES Act funding which will be disbursed. It was decided that sub-committee would be formed with the four co-chairs to discuss the issue in a more focused way to address bringing all the resources to bear about what can be deployed.

b) Broward County Public Schools (Dan Gohl/Philip Shaver/Lori Canning)

Absenteeism: Dan Gohl shared that approximately 8,000 children did not enroll for this school year. It is very likely that there will be an incredible increase in both mobility of students and potentially homelessness in students due to the expiration of the eviction moratorium. Philip Shaver reported that 8,208 students had recorded 15 or more unexcused absences or the year. He shared further that Kindergarten and Grade 1 have the highest numbers of students who did not return this year. Thus, it is essential that all work toward reengagement of children in Pre-K, First and Second grade.

Mr. Shaver said the HEART program had 5,000 students identified for the entire year last year. By this time last year, they had already identified 3,000 of those students. This year they have only identified 1,800. Given the tougher economic conditions that exist this year, School District officials are very concerned that many students are lost. Carol Hattan (Vice Mayor of City of Davie) suggested a deeper involvement and participation in the Broward County Housing Council meetings which would provide access to all relevant stakeholders with a wealth of information to allow for comparison of data and information sharing.

There will be need for a concerted effort to reengage families to let them know it is safe to return to school. Penny Bernath suggested a PSA be created. A sub-committee was formed to include Sandra Bernard-Bastien (CSC), Lori Canning (BCPS) and Penny Bernath (SoFlo PBS) as the core. Others will be identified.

Emergency order: Lori Canning reported that an emergency order was received which required the identification of kindergarten eligible students with the goal of engaging them to maximize kindergarten readiness and support long-term

achievement. She shared further that BCPS will be working with ELC on their VPK outreach initiative which begins in January.

Dan Gohl explained that the State issued the emergency order for school districts to operate in Spring. Broward school district will operate an innovative program. BCPS must inform any student that's not making, "adequate academic progress" that they are supposed to come back to the classroom and strongly encourage them to return. They cannot be mandated to return, but the State has mandated that the school district reach out to every child and inform the parents that BCPS wants them to return.

Countdown to Kindergarten: Lori shared that the event is scheduled for April 17. Parker Playhouse will be the venue of choice. Social distancing will be observed if COVID protocols still prevail. If there is need to cancel, the event will be canceled. Anyone interested in being part of the committee should reach out to Lori Canning directly. A website will be created to specifically promote Kindergarten readiness.

Student Performance: Dan reported that the number of students who received one grade F is up by 10% and the number of students with two or more Fs is up by two and a half times. About one third of the students who were on distance learning in the first quarter have already returned to face to face instruction for second quarter. The team is now polling all the families for their preferences for the spring and, inviting every child who's not making progress to return to in-person schooling. BCPS will be offering winter break academies will be offering spring break academies or other kinds of support mechanisms.

Lori shared that she received a notification about CARES grant funding specifically for a reading intervention. The team will be working on a plan for K through 3 reading. There will also be a K through 12 reading plan that details if intervention possibilities if there are any deficiencies in phonics, phonemic awareness, fluency, comprehension. The plan is due at the beginning of January.

State Testing: Mr. Gohl reported that the State of Florida intends to give all Florida standards assessment exams in person only in April and May. At this point, there has been no suspension of the accountability system, which means unless schools get 95% participation, there are sanctions and school grades will be compromised. He shared he is advocating for complete suspension of the accountability system. In January, all English language learners are to return to be tested in person because the state will not allow remote testing.

c) Children's Services Council (Sandra Bernard-Bastien)

Sandra Bernard-Bastien reported that Broward County received County of the Year for Read for the Record. She thanked everyone for their contribution.

d) Broward County Libraries (Kimberly White)

Libraries have reopened to the public operating under new temporary hours.

The Books & Bears program still happened this year with 2,500 new books and teddy bears being sent to 68 different child care centers reaching approximately 2,500 students.

Summer planning has begun.

Grants: BCL received a mini grant for English for Families program to provide English classes for kids and their families. The Florida Communities Councils will be partnering with some program instructors from Broward County Public Schools ESL Department to implement that program. A second grant to address the digital divide for students in a targeted summer program using tablets was also received.

Kimberly reported 84,132 students are registered for library cards.

Beanstack: Schools have their licenses for Beanstack which is separate from the Library's license. During the summer, there was a program which allowed students to link their accounts in an effort keep the momentum generated from the summer competition going. A few different mini challenges have since been launched during the school year. The story book challenge was done using Beanstack this year and had 200 registrants. A mini read woke challenge for which approximately 450 students signed up. The Big Read will be done using Beanstack in January. The intention is to do something for Black History Month as well. Cindy Arenberg Seltzer suggested engaging those cities that committed to being Broward Reads cities to better promote Beanstack, possibly through an inter-city competition.

III. Community Updates

Bob Mayersohn (City of Parkland) reported that the city is planning to incorporate a story walk on a permanent basis.

Lori shared that the book distribution for the Read for the Record book *Evelyn Del Rey is Moving Away* is being scheduled for end of January. Carol Hatton will contact Lori to organize a distribution event for a local church.

Cindy Arenberg Seltzer thanked HandsOn Broward for their work recruiting volunteers for Read for the Record Day and thanked all committee members.

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IV. Meeting Schedule for FY 20-21:

Meetings will be conducted virtually unless otherwise stated. February 3, April 7, June 2, August 4, October 6

V. Adjourn Meeting

Meeting adjourned at 11:04 a.m.