



To: Members, Board of Directors
From: Eric Williams, Ed.D., CEO & President
Date: 7/23/2025
Subject: Confidential Board Update

E.W.

I am in my third week as CEO and President of Champions For Learning. I am loving it! Champions For Learning makes a tremendous difference in the lives of our students and educators - I am honored to have the opportunity to work alongside you as changemakers through Champions For Learning!

Notes

1. I want to give a huge shout-out to Stephanie Viviano for her service as Interim CEO & President. She not only kept the lights on, so to speak, she moved the organization forward. For example, she enhanced the annual plans created by team members by placing a greater emphasis on key performance indicators (KPIs). My understanding is that she informally assumed additional leadership responsibilities even before officially assuming the interim role. Invaluable work!
2. I shared the attached *100 Day Entry Plan* (pps.4-5) during the CEO selection process. This plan reflects the emphasis on relationship-building during my first 100 days. The document includes four "Connecting with . . ." sections: Board members, Collier County Public Schools team members; external partners; as well as staff and volunteers. I've attached a list (p.6) of initial meetings with external partners that I've held. In addition to relationship-building, I'm focused on learning more about our impact on students and educators and opportunities to expand this impact.

The Entry Plan lists as a desired outcome, "Create and launch a dynamic, strategic roadmap to strengthen programs and expand development efforts to directly increase the number of Collier students served and deepen the long-term impact on their success." I plan to discuss with the Executive Committee the possibility of seeking approval from the Board of Directors this fall regarding a one-year strategic roadmap and the concept of using the roadmap as a bridge between the *2022 – 2025 Strategic Plan* and a new multi-year strategic plan that perhaps the Board would adopt in mid- to late-2026.

3. Champions For Learning recently welcomed Nicole Luque and Marilyn Daniels as new team members.

Nicole Luque started as our new Volunteer Manager on June 30. Nicole moved to Naples from the UK in 2018 and has been working for nonprofit organizations in Collier since her arrival. Nicole has a passion for community engagement and

working with Collier's youth having worked as a Counselor and Mentor Manager at The Boys and Girls Club of Collier, Fostering Success and The Humane Society. Marilyn Daniels started as our new Director of Educator Programs on July 21. Marilyn grew up in Collier County and attended Collier County Public Schools (CCPS). She worked for CCPS the last 16 years, serving for nine years as an elementary school teacher before transitioning into district-level positions including Coordinator of Professional Learning and Coordinator of Gifted and Advanced Programs.

As part of her work as Interim CEO, Stephanio Viviano led the hiring process for each role, including the review of resumes, the interview process, and the offering of the positions. She engaged several other Champions For Learning team members in interviewing approximately seven candidates for each position.

4. I interviewed four Collier-based candidates for the Chief Development Officer position during my first week as CEO. Development Team members and I conducted second interviews with two of these candidates last week. We have decided to expand the regional focus of our search, targeting potential candidates with significant development experience extending from south Florida (both coasts) up to Orlando. The position will also be posted on the website of professional associations to which development professionals belong. CJ Hueston's contract with Champions For Learning to conduct the most recent CDO search included a clause requiring her to conduct a second search if the initial candidate did not stay in the position a specified length of time. She is leading this search process in accordance with that clause of her contract. She estimates that it will take at least 45-60 days to identify a robust candidate pool. Taking our time to find the right candidate for this position is important enough for me to take on the challenge of directly supervising the five development team members in addition to other team members.
5. I am working closely with Marilyn Daniels, our new Director of Educator Programs, regarding Golden Apple. We plan to return to holding a first-class sit-down dinner event for Golden Apple. We are currently assessing whether we it is feasible to institute some form of community-based nominations as part of the selection process this year, which will need to commence soon. Marilyn and I are meeting with multiple colleagues and will meet next week with Lisa Morse, Director of Community Engagement, CCPS, regarding this topic.

Emails and Other Documents

1. *Officially Hit \$5.0M in Our Endowment*; email from Stephanie Viviano; July 16, 2025; p7.

2. *Teacher Grants Update*; email from Marilyn Daniels; July 22, 2025; pps.8-9

Communication

1. [Dr. Eric Williams Selected as Next President and CEO of Champions For Learning](#); posted July 7, 2025 to News page of Champions For Learning website
2. [Champions for Learning names new CEO](#); published July 7, 2025 by Gulfshore Business.
3. [Introduction of Champions for Learning CEO Video](#); posted on our YouTube channel on July 7, 2025.

Key Dates

1. Finance Committee Meeting – September 11, 2025, 2 p.m.
2. Executive Committee Meeting – September 16, 2025, 3:30 p.m.
3. Board of Directors Meeting – September 23, 2025, 3:30 p.m.
4. Finance Committee Meeting – November 5, 2025, 2 p.m.
5. Executive Committee Meeting – November 11, 2025; 3:30 p.m.
6. Board of Directors Meeting – November 18, 2025, 3:30 p.m.
7. Night for Champions Gala – February 21, 2026, 6 p.m. to 11 p.m.; The Ritz-Carlton, Naples



Connecting, Listening, Learning

100-Day President/CEO Entry Plan

Eric Williams, Ed.D.

Desired Outcomes

- Establish effective, collegial relationships with members of the Board of Directors
- Accelerate collaboration with all levels of Collier County Public Schools
- Connect with staff members and external partners
- Learn more about the impact of Champions for Learning on Collier students and opportunities to expand this impact
- Preliminarily assess the ability of the organizational structure to maximize impact on students; fill high-priority staff positions
- Create and launch a dynamic, strategic roadmap to strengthen programs and expand development efforts to directly increase the number of Collier students served and deepen the long-term impact on their success

Connecting with Board Members

- Meet individually with Board members to listen to why they serve on the Board, learn their ideas for collaboration among Board members and the President/CEO, and understand their views regarding how to increase the number of students reached and improve their educational and career outcomes
- Seek understanding of Board member perspectives relating to the respective roles of direct services, recognition of excellence, and grant-making to Collier County Public Schools in maximizing the impact on students
- Debrief with Board members regarding the entry plan and assess next steps for clarifying the mission, vision, and plans of the foundation at the conclusion of the 100 days via a three-hour retreat

Connecting with Collier County Public Schools (CCPS) Team Members

- Meet with the Superintendent, other district-level leaders, principals, and teachers to lay the foundation for closer collaboration
- Articulate a vision with CCPS team members regarding how Champions for Learning and CCPS collaborate to change the lives of Collier students

Connecting with External Partners

- Meet individually with key institutional funders (including the Naples Children & Education Foundation, the Richard M. Schulze Family Foundation, and the Collier Community Foundation), corporate donors and individual contributors who share a commitment to expanding life-changing opportunities for students
- Meet individually with key programmatic partners, such as Grace Place for Children and Families, the Immokalee Foundation, the Guadalupe Center, and the Boys & Girls Club to understand how Champions for Learning can expand its impact on students
- Meet via focus groups with other external partners, including key Future Ready Collier partners, corporate partners, community leaders and donors

Connecting with Staff and Volunteers

- Collaboratively identify existing workplace norms and refine as needed
- Identify priority summertime, first semester, and second semester tasks; create and initiate project plans
- Fill high-priority staff positions
- Hold focus groups with Changemakers, including volunteers who mentor students, assist with classroom grant selections, support events and contribute to various programs

Intended Emerging/Evolving Perceptions of the CEO/President and Champions for Learning

- CEO/President with a laser-like focus on expanding the impact of Champions for Learning on students
- high energy, trustworthy, people-person CEO/President
- CEO/President who is connecting with CCPS and the broader community
- Champions for Learning as a high-impact, visible organization that makes a difference through partnerships with individuals and organizations in the community to improve student success

Organization	Individual	Meetings and Events Title	Date
Collier County Public Schools	Atime, Carlos; Litchko, Nicole; Ysela	Career & Technical Education Staff Members	7/14/2025
Collier County Public Schools	Ricciardelli, Leslie & Morris, Lisa	Superintendent; Director, Community Engagement	7/17/2025
Collier County Public Schools	Eaton, Sandra	Chief of Staff	7/17/2025
Schulze Family Foundation	Church, Lisa	Senior Program Officer (also former CFL team member)	7/17/2025
Schulze Family Foundation	Geier, Mary Beth	Florida Director	7/17/2025
Schulze Family Foundation	Horton, Alan		7/21/2025
Collier Community Foundation	Connolly-Keesler, Eileen	President and CEO	7/23/2025

Eric Williams

From: Stephanie Viviano
Sent: Wednesday, July 16, 2025 11:45 AM
To: William Lutz; Lipitz, Roger; Martha Rozman; Eric Williams
Subject: Officially hit \$5.0M in our endowment!

Good morning, all,

I am still waiting for the performance reports from FEG for June 30, 2025, but the investment accounts here at CFL have been updated. Here is my reconciliation sheet for the endowment.

We have officially hit \$5.0M!!!!

More details to come, once I get them, but I wanted to share.

Many thanks!

Stephanie

Eric Williams

From: Marilyn Daniels
Sent: Tuesday, July 22, 2025 4:33 PM
To: Eric Williams
Subject: Classroom Grants

Champions for Learning Board,

We are pleased to share an update on the Classroom Grants Program with information provided by Abby Fuller, Ed.D., a summer contractor and volunteer, and Sydney Fahrenbruch, Director of Digital Fundraising & Operations.

Classroom Grants Cycle Overview (2025–2026)

Classroom Grants Cycle opened for teacher submissions on July 10, and all approved requests were posted to the Find It Fund It Florida website on July 17. These requests are eligible for public funding through March 7, 2026. As of July 21, there are 50 requests totaling over \$39,000 in funding.

Teachers may submit up to four grant requests for consideration by Champions For Learning's volunteer Selection Committee, with a maximum annual award of \$2,000 per teacher. Requests beyond this limit will be posted for community-based funding only. Individual grant requests may not exceed \$2,000, ensuring broader impact across classrooms.

New Enhancements for Educators

To support educators in this competitive process, several new resources have been added to the Classroom Grants website:

- A Grant Writing Technical Assistance Paper outlining application components and scoring criteria
- A 34-minute recorded Virtual Training on program requirements
- A 2-minute informational video embedded on the site
- Six sample grant requests to guide submissions
- An expanded FAQ section

Next Steps

Upcoming actions include:

- Securing the Surprise Delivery Date
- Sharing program details at CCPS administrator, charter, and new teacher meetings
- Ongoing review and approval of grant requests
- Preparing the scoring spreadsheet and ClassWallet for fund distribution

Volunteers received an orientation email on July 21, including updates and an introduction to the new Director of Educator Programs. A virtual training session for volunteers is scheduled for August (date TBD), with materials already prepared to reflect process refinements.

Promotional Efforts

Sydney Fahrenbruch shared that Champions For Learning is actively promoting the grant opportunity through:

- Email notifications to educators in partnership with CCPS
- A dedicated landing page with resources and FAQs
- Social media announcements (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram)
- Geofenced digital ads, targeted email campaigns, and weekly ads in the Naples Daily News
- An upcoming press release on grant application volume
- Community events hosted with local businesses to spotlight funding needs

We're excited to see the momentum building around this year's Classroom Grants Program and are grateful for the continued collaboration and support from our educators, volunteers, and community partners.

Marilyn Daniels

Director of Educator Programs

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"Celebrating 35 years of supporting Collier County Students and Educators"