



Linking Parents to Early Childhood Success

September 2012

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September Parent Link



President's Message:

National Hispanic Heritage Month is observed each year between September 15 and October 15. It is a celebration of the history, achievements, contributions and culture of Hispanics. This year, I hope you will join the Early Learning Coalition in paying tribute to generations of men and women who have made significant contributions to our country and communities.

The early care and education community can play an important role in celebrating Hispanic Heritage Month by incorporating activities that include music, literature, food and art into their daily curriculum. Highlighting Hispanic culture as it relates to diversity of heritage, family, tradition and professional accomplishments is another good way to help teach children about Hispanic heritage.

Sincerely,

Evelio C. Torres
President and CEO
Early Learning Coalition of Miami-Dade/Monroe

MyFloridaTray: Changes to Florida's School Lunch Menu

School lunch wasn't the tastiest for many of us growing up, let alone the healthiest. But Fresh for Florida Kids is trying to change that for our children. Approved to have started this school year, Florida school cafeterias are now required to meet new federal nutritional standards for school meals. According to the Fresh for Florida Kids website, these new standards are based on recommendations from the Institute of Medicine and follow the 2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans.



School lunches must now meet the following standards:

- Age-appropriate calorie limits
- Larger servings of fruit and vegetables, including dark green and red/orange vegetables
- Fat-free or 1% milk (flavored milk must be fat-free)
- More whole grains
- Less sodium

The biggest changes Fresh for Florida Kids will encounter in the first year will be offering fruits and vegetables as two separate meal components every day and decreasing calories and sodium.

This new menu does not guarantee to be a hit with your children (we all know broccoli is not in the top picks for vegetables), but they will be receiving a better, more balanced meal.

Reference:

Fresh for Florida Kids: It's a New Day for Florida's School Lunches Parent Flyer- <http://www.freshforfloridakids.com/0/Parent%20letter%20-%20FINAL.pdf>

Fresh for Florida Kids- www.freshforfloridakids.com

M-DCPS Pre-K-12 Special Education Conference

Miami-Dade County Public Schools Pre-K-12 Special Education will be hosting the **2012 Steps for Success Conference, Saturday, October 13, 2012 from 8 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.**

The multilingual conference (English, Spanish, Creole), will be held at Miami Edison Senior High School, 6161 N.W. 5th Court, Miami, FL 33127. There will be resources, training, education and information available to parents of students with disabilities.

Topics include:

- Early Intervention
- Behavioral/Discipline
- Secondary Transition
- Achievement/Student Support/Identification and Eligibility

To register, visit <http://tiny.cc/stepsconference>.

If you would like more information or resources, visit the Miami-Dade Public Schools Division of Special Education [website](#).

Reference-

Steps for Success Conference Parent Flyer- http://ese.dadeschools.net/pdfs_20122013/StepsforSuccess_101312.pdf

On the Web: Miami-Dade GREEN

In an effort to keep our beautiful city green, Miami-Dade County has launched the Miami-Dade Green [website](#). The website has a variety of ways for you to conserve energy, water and other natural resources, because if we don't do it now, it might not be available in the future.

Here are a few things you'll find:

- **Energy Tracking Tool:** This is a free personal energy dashboard that helps track and analyze the energy usage in your home or business.
- **Rebates and Incentives:** There are many programs that can rebate a portion of an appliance purchase, such as an ENERGY STAR refrigerator, or exchange certain house items for more energy efficient ones, such as your bathroom showerhead or light bulbs.
- **Living Green Programs:** Such programs include the Environmentally Endangered Lands Program and the Every Drop Counts kids' poster contest.

Don't miss out on some great going green opportunities.

Reference:

Miami-Dade GREEN- www.green.miamidade.gov

Miami-Dade County- www.miamidade.gov

ReadingPals: An Early Literacy Initiative

Nearly a third of Florida's third graders attending public school cannot read at the minimally proficient levels. Sadly, those children are four times more likely to drop out of high school.

What is ReadingPals?

In an effort to ensure that more children are reading at grade level by the end of third grade, The Children's Movement of Florida and partners are excited to announce **ReadingPals** -- a three-year initiative focused on engaging, training and deploying volunteer "reading pals" in 10 Florida regions.



Who is involved in ReadingPals?

Partners include The Children's Movement, local United Ways, school districts, Women's Leadership Councils, Early Learning Coalitions, and Children's Services Councils among others. Together, the partners focus on improving the reading abilities of students from prekindergarten to third grade in lower-performing schools.

Where is this initiative taking place?

ReadingPals is being launched in 10 Florida regions through local United Ways, including Miami-Dade County.

How can you get involved?

Volunteers are needed in each of the 10 regions for one hour per week (for at least 25 weeks) to read in individual or small group settings. Volunteers will be trained and provided background screenings before entering the program. The one hour volunteers give each week will have an effect that lasts a lifetime.

To learn more about the ReadingPals program, please sign-up at: <http://childrensmovementflorida.org/action/literacy/>, or email john.knight@childrensmovementflorida.org.

Readers Encouraged to Send Questions to Ask Dr. Hughes, ELC's Child Development Expert

Each month in *Parent Link*, Christine Hughes, Ph.D, a research and evaluation analyst for the Early Learning Coalition of Miami-Dade/Monroe will answer your questions about child development (from birth to 5 years old) on a variety of topics such as language, social skills, play, behavior, motor skills, learning habits, and more.

Please email your questions to info@elcmdm.org with Ask Dr. Hughes in the subject line. Also, include the city or location of your residence in Miami-Dade or Monroe County (e.g., Coconut Grove, Kendall, Key West).

Please note that questions may be edited, and not every question received will be answered in the newsletter. To protect the privacy of individuals and maintain confidentiality, names will not be printed, but we may refer to individuals by area (for example, "A mother in Miami Beach asked...").

Dr. Hughes earned her Ph.D. in psychology from the University of Miami, where she currently teaches part-time. Her research has focused on the development of at-risk infants and children in early intervention.

The information provided in this column released by the Early Learning Coalition of Miami-Dade/Monroe, courtesy of Dr. Hughes, is not intended to be used as psychological, mental health, or medical evaluation or service.

As laws, details and personal situations vary from person to person and state to state, articles and content contained in the newsletter are not and cannot be used as a substitute for legal, parental, health, mental health, or any other advice.

The column is not intended to be a solicitation of business or the furnishing of self-help advice. Readers are strongly urged to consult independent and qualified professionals before making any decisions. The views expressed are those of the writer and not necessarily of the Early Learning Coalition of Miami-Dade/Monroe.

ELC and You: The ELC is on Facebook!

Have you liked our Facebook page yet? If you haven't, you are missing out on some great information!

The Early Learning Coalition of Miami-Dade/Monroe can be found as ELCMDM on Facebook.

Here are some of things you'll find on our page:

- The latest news on early education and quality initiatives
- Contests and giveaways
- Local community event announcements
- Weekly quotes, images, and more!

So what are you waiting for? Click [here](#) and like us today!



Local Events for the Whole Family!

City of Hialeah Literacy Fair

The Education and Community Services Department hosts the annual Literacy Fair to bring important information to the Hialeah community. There will also be book readings, crafts and more.

Date: Saturday, September 22, 2012

Time: 11 a.m. - 3 p.m.

Location: John F. Kennedy Library

190 West 49 St.

Hialeah, FL 33012

Cost: FREE

For more information, call 305-819-9143.

2012 Steps for Success

M-DCPS Pre-K - 12 Special Education Conference

Date: Saturday, October 13, 2012

Time: 8 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.

Location: Miami Edison Senior High School

6161 N.W. 5th Court

Miami, FL 33127

Cost: FREE

To register, visit <http://tiny.cc/stepsconference>.

About the Early Learning Coalition of Miami-Dade/Monroe

The Early Learning Coalition of Miami-Dade/Monroe is a nonprofit organization dedicated to ensuring high-quality early care and education for children in Miami-Dade and Monroe counties. Through a variety of affordable and innovative early education and voluntary prekindergarten programs, the Coalition serves more than 50,000 children ages birth to 5-years-old and their families. Founded in 2000, the Early Learning Coalition is among 31 similar organizations in the State of Florida established following the enactment of the School Readiness Act, which consolidated Florida's early learning services into one integrated program. For more information, visit www.elcmdm.org.

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Early Learning Coalition of Miami-Dade/Monroe | 2555 Ponce de Leon Boulevard | Suite 500 | Coral Gables | FL | 33134