



Provider News Alert

JANUARY 2009

Issue 1

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ELC Mission & Vision

Mission

To promote high-quality school readiness, voluntary pre-kindergarten and after school programs, thus increasing all children's chances of achieving future educational success and becoming productive members of society. The Coalition seeks to further the physical, social, emotional and intellectual needs of Miami-Dade and

Chairman's Message



On January 21, 2009, House Bill 501 was filed. This bill proposes to eliminate all Florida early learning coalitions. The powers, duties, and functions of each respective coalition are to be transferred to the Agency for Workforce Innovation (AWI) effective July 1, 2009. As a result, State government will become the only entity responsible for administering school readiness and Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) programs.

As parents and providers who are passionate about the future of our children's care and education, it is crucial that we unite with our fellow educators, community partners, and elected officials to prevent the passage of this bill. Allowing the State to fully assume the responsibility of administering our early learning programs and resources discourages an active community role in our children's early care and education. It is for this very reason that the State established local coalitions and an Early Learning Advisory Council; to provide increasingly direct and localized access to Florida families. For the sake of our children, we must not allow this critical connection to be dissolved.

Personal and active involvement is necessary to ensuring the lifelong success of our children; it will be lost if community coalitions are not permitted to administer early learning programs and resources. Over the last three years, the Early Learning Coalition of Miami-Dade/Monroe has added over \$22,000,000 to the early learning system in Miami-Dade and Monroe counties through the acquisition of federal, local, foundation, and corporate grants and investments.

We have made significant progress in Florida's early learning system with the involvement of the private sector, child care providers, the school system, sustained advocacy efforts, and statewide coordination with our government partners. The drastic change outlined in the proposed legislation will be detrimental to the momentum we have gained and the progress we have made.

We are our children's first teachers. Under the guidance of early

Monroe County children with a priority toward the ages before birth through age 5.

Vision

To ensure a comprehensive and integrated system providing for all families and their children, beginning before birth to 5 years, the affordable opportunity to enter school ready to learn and succeed in life.

Community Meetings

January 29, 2009
9:30 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.
Legislative Public Hearing



learning coalitions, we should be the ones to directly oversee and determine the future of their early care and education. Let us reinforce this important message more than ever by actively joining forces to prevent the passage of House Bill 501. I appreciate your support.

Sincerely,

Octavio A. Verdeja, Jr.
Chairman, Board of Directors

Important Announcements

Proposed Stimulus Legislation on Early Childhood Care and Education

In a recent congressional session, House Democrats released a summary of their proposed stimulus legislation. The section on early childhood care and education, as indicated below, has not been finalized, however it highlights Congress's potential priorities for the stimulus.

- **Child Care Development Block Grant:** \$2 billion to provide child care services for an additional 300,000 children in low-income families while their parents go to work. Today only one out of seven eligible children receives care
- **Head Start:** \$2.1 billion to provide comprehensive development services to help 110,000 additional children succeed in school. Funds are distributed based on need. Only about half of all eligible preschoolers and less than 3 percent of eligible infants and toddlers participate in Head Start
- **IDEA Infants and Families:** \$600 million for formula grants to help states serve children with disabilities age 2 and younger
- **Community Services Block Grant:** \$1 billion for grants to local communities to support employment, food, housing, and healthcare efforts serving those hardest hit by the recession. Community action agencies have seen dramatic increases in requests for their assistance due to rising unemployment, housing foreclosures, and high food and fuel prices
- **Community Development Block Grants:** \$1 billion for community and economic development projects including housing and services for those hit hard by tough economic times
- **Medicare and Medicaid Regulations:** The bill extends the moratorium on Medicaid and Medicare regulations through October 1, 2009

Public Forum on Changes to VPK Funding

On Saturday, January 17, 2009, Coalition President & CEO Evelio C. Torres participated on a panel organized by the Alliance for Early Care and Education to discuss changes to Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) funding and how those changes will impact early childhood education in our community. The tone of the meeting was very constructive and the Alliance did an excellent job organizing the event and advocating for additional resources for the early care and education system.

Also joining the panel were State Representatives James Bush, III (D-109); Anitere Flores (R-114); Erik Fresen (R-111); and Yolly Roberson (D-104). Sixty-three providers were present for the public forum.

Topics of discussion included were:

- Reducing paperwork requirements and monitoring
- Creating an electronic system for providers to report student attendance
- Increasing reimbursement rates
- Extending SR benefits (for 90 days) to parents who lose their jobs
- Exploring other sources of revenue, including increasing certain taxes
- Stopping the push for degreed teachers unless there are dollars to support the requirement
- Strategically managing the push for quality, to make sure it is in line with available dollars to fully support the effort at the center level (salaries, benefits)
- Adding organizations that receive state funds to state term contracts so that the organizations can be eligible to purchase at state rates

We sincerely appreciate the willingness of our state representatives to take the time on a Saturday afternoon, after ending what we know was a very grueling special legislative session, to take part in this bipartisan effort to listen to the concerns of our early care and education community. We are extremely fortunate to have such caring, compassionate, and professional elected officials representing our community's interest in Tallahassee.

All four state representatives agreed to continue working closely with the group to find solutions to these and other challenges. A follow-up-meeting will be scheduled. Please

stay tuned for upcoming details.

Going Green

The Coalition is making strides to create a more green office environment. One of the first processes we are changing is the distribution method of our News Alert and other mass communications. This will help reduce the need for paper and cut down on the amount of waste in our environment.



To encourage providers to sign up for our electronic delivery service, we have created a contest. The first 20 providers that set up an official organization email-account to which they can receive Coalition correspondence will receive a gift card to AMC Movie Theaters. This contest is only open to providers who do not currently have an email address in our contact database. This contest has been extended until February 15, 2009.

Please send your emails to gcarreras@elcmdm.org. Complete contact information should be submitted, including: center name, address, phone and fax numbers.

Child Care Executive Partnership Program

Take advantage of a great program! Congratulations to those providers who have submitted their CCEP agreements to Alina Soto at the Coalition. The next step is to fax the Step One Pre-Screening Form with your employee's information to Sharon Gordon at (305) 514-6152 if you are in Miami-Dade County, and to Kathy Snyder at (305) 292-7156 if you are in Monroe County.

For eligible employees, send only the Pre-Screening Form; there is no need to send supporting documentation to Ms. Gordon or Ms. Snyder. Once the Pre-Screening Form is received, someone will contact the employee to arrange an eligibility appointment.

Clarification: Owners of early care & education centers are not eligible for reimbursement for the care of their own children in their center. For more information on the CCEP program visit our website at www.elcmdm.org, or call Alina Soto at (305) 646-7220, ext. 282.

Board Committees

As seen in previous news alerts, we have featured our board members to familiarize our community with the dedicated professionals who serve on the Coalition's board of directors. This month, it is our pleasure to highlight Board Vice Chairperson **Yvonne Turner Johnson, M.D.**



In an effort to escape the doldrums of winter in the Northeast, Dr. Yvonne Turner Johnson came to Miami in 1987, and has worked in the Emergency Department of South Miami Hospital for the past ten years. Her passions for the excitement of emergency medicine, the sand and sun of South Florida and the cultural diversity of Miami-Dade has led her to make this community her home.

A native of Atlantic City, New Jersey, Dr. Johnson is a graduate of Harvard College and Howard University College of Medicine. After graduating from medical school in 1987, she completed her residency at Jackson Memorial Hospital/University of Miami in 1990. Dr. Johnson was on staff in the Emergency Department of Cedars Hospital for more than seven years and has also attended the Emergency Department of Doctor's Hospital in Coral Gables. Dr. Johnson was in private practice for several years with Dr. Robert Cava and had staff privileges at Mercy Hospital as well before dedicating her professional life exclusively to the practice of emergency medicine.

Currently, Dr. Johnson serves as a member of the Medical Executive Committee at South Miami Hospital as well as several ad hoc committees. She is the Emergency Department Director of the Heart Attack Unit at South Miami Hospital and has given numerous lectures on the topic of 'Women and Heart Disease' both locally and internationally.

Dr. Johnson has been a board member of the Early Learning Coalition of Miami-Dade/Monroe since 2001, and currently serves as Board Vice Chairman and Chairman of the Nominating Committee. She is also a member of the American College of Physicians and has been active with the National Medical Association. Dr. Johnson serves on the Executive Board of the South Miami Chapter of Jack and Jill of America. She was also a member of the board of the Miami City Ballet School and served as the "school doctor" for the ballet school's International Summer Program for several years.

Dr. Yvonne Johnson is married to Albert Johnson, II. They have three children, Jessica; Albert, III; and Jasmine.

Descriptions of Board Committees

In an effort to encourage participation, please see the descriptions of each Board Committee's responsibilities. If you are interested in attending any of these meetings or becoming involved, we have noted upcoming meetings below. You may also view the "Events" calendar on our [website](#).

Executive Committee: The Executive Committee is responsible for providing leadership for the Board. This is accomplished by setting policies to encourage effective governance, administration, and legal representation; reviewing and recommending legislative proposals at all levels of government; and resolving conflicts among committees and between the Coalition and other partners.

Nominating Committee: The Nominating Committee is responsible for nominating officers and members, and nominating replacement officers when there are vacancies on the Board.

Program Policy and Strategy Committee: The Program Policy and Strategy Committee is responsible for evaluating Coalition programs, formulating strategy, and making policy recommendations to improve the quality of early care and education in Miami-Dade and Monroe Counties.

Provider Services Committee: The Provider Services Committee is responsible for addressing the issues and concerns of both School Readiness and Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) early care and education providers in Miami-Dade County.

Governance and Bylaws Committee: The Governance and Bylaws Committee periodically reviews the Coalition's bylaws, policies and procedures. They are responsible for making recommendations to the Board of Directors regarding policies that provide specific guidance and direction to the Coalition and its leadership concerning all significant aspects of governance.

Audit Committee: The Audit Committee meets to discuss audits carried out by outside independent entities to make sure the Coalition is in accordance with State Statutes and Laws as governed by the Agency for Workforce Innovation.

Finance Committee: The Finance Committee is responsible for providing oversight of the Coalition's financial obligations, for reviewing compliance with Coalition policies, procedures, and applicable laws and regulations.

Legislative Advocacy Committee: The Legislative Advocacy Committee is responsible for working with legislators in order to educate and promote funding and support for early care and education.

Upcoming Board and Committee Meetings:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Location</u>
Finance Committee	26-Jan	8:00 AM	ELC Board Room
Board of Directors	02-Feb	8:00 AM	ELC Board Room

School Readiness

The Coalition Receives Continued Funding for the Recognition & Response Initiative

The Early Learning Coalition has been selected to receive continued funding to complete the Recognition & Response initiative in partnership with The Early Childhood Initiative Foundation, and guiding research partner, Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute in Chapel Hill, North Carolina. The study is research-based and utilizes mCLASS:Circle for assessment and Read It Again! intervention programming. The program is provided in 13 early care and education centers, thus serving 4-year-olds throughout Miami-Dade County in 16 classrooms total.

The Emily Hall Tremaine Foundation has funded the Recognition & Response project for the past two years, and this extension will allow the study to reach completion. It is expected that the research outcomes will be of national significance, providing identification and strategies for young children with learning difficulties. "We are grateful to the Tremaine Foundation for the generous investment they are making in our community and our children. We are diligently working with our research partners at the Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute to ensure that this project receives the national recognition it deserves so that other communities can reap the benefits of our work," said Evelio C. Torres, President and CEO of the Early Learning Coalition.

Coalition Inclusion Program Director Bethany Sands and her Inclusion & Assessment team deserve great praise for how their dedicated efforts have impacted the professional development of educators and the educational success of children. We also thank and appreciate the leadership and advocacy of David Lawrence, Jr., and Ana Sejeck of The Early Childhood Initiative Foundation/Ready Schools Miami for their confidence in our team and for working so hard to bring dollars and innovative programs to our community.

Update on Sponsorship of NACCRA Conference

In News Alert, Issue 17, we announced that the Coalition will be holding a raffle to sponsor the travel and attendance of three providers to the NACCRA conference being held in Washington, DC, from March 10 - 14, 2009.

Please note that in light of recent budget reductions, we have found it necessary to cancel sponsorship to the conference for all ELC staff and providers. We regret that we will all miss this great professional development and networking opportunity, but in these difficult economic times we must all do our part to preserve our shrinking resources. Thank you for your understanding. If you have any questions, or concerns, please contact Alina Soto at asoto@elcmdm.org or by calling (305) 646-7220, ext. 282.

Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) Updates

VPK Readiness Rate for 2007-2008

The preliminary rates have been posted on the Readiness Rate website at <https://vpk.fldoe.org/>. You may view your individual rate by typing in your user ID and password. You have until January 29, 2009, to submit any dispute. Please understand your dispute must be related to the data, and not regarding personal opinions about the process. The minimum rate will not be known until the State Board of Education meets later this month.

Change of Ownership

If you are selling your center, please inform the buyer that you participate in VPK so the new owner can submit a new application package before the new license is issued. The Certification Unit can review the information and determine if any additional documentation is needed. Once the provider receives the new license, it should be faxed to the Coalition ASAP. This will prevent loss of funds or extension of the VPK schedule.

Proposed Budget Cuts for VPK in Miami-Dade County

Proposed budget cuts for Voluntary Prekindergarten include a reduction of \$860,748. The school year base allocation (price per child) will be reduced by \$53.77 (\$2,666.11 to \$2,612.34) for the remainder of the school year program. The summer base allocation (price per child) will be reduced by \$444.35 (\$2,666.11 to \$2,221.76).

Making a Change?

All changes must be submitted in original form. When submitting a change, do not forget to send the appropriate form (Form(s) 10 and/or 11) with a Notification Form indicating the change you are making. Changes should not be faxed.

Is Your Director Credential Up-to-Date?

Director credentials began to expire as of January 1, 2009. Please look at your certificate. If it is expiring in the next few months, you should start the renewal process now. Allowing your credential to expire may jeopardize your VPK program. Our office will be reviewing files for programs with expired director credentials.

Summer VPK

If you intend to provide the Summer VPK Program, it is not too early to start planning. The maximum class size has been raised to 12 children

for every teacher. Please note the change in reimbursement listed above. We will be accepting applications beginning February 17, 2009. Keep in mind it can take about two weeks to review your file during peak application period.

Monroe County News Briefs

Proposed Budget Cuts for VPK in Monroe County

Proposed budget cuts for Voluntary Prekindergarten include a reduction of \$860,748. The school year base allocation (price per child) will be reduced by \$53.79 (\$2,667.16 to \$2,613.37) for the remainder of the school year program. The summer base allocation (price per child) will be reduced by \$444.53 (\$2,667.16 to \$2,222.63).

"Teaching Tools for Young Children" Workshop



ELC Classroom Mentors, Trina Rodriguez (pictured) and Amber Eby, recently provided a "Teaching Tools for Young Children" Workshop at St. James Children's Center in Islamorada. The first in a three-part series, this workshop focused on helping teachers create practical plans to address challenging behaviors in the classroom.

Save the Dates:

Monroe County Advisory Committee Meeting

Wednesday, January 28, 2009; 1:00 p.m.

Monroe County School District Board Room, 241 Trumbo Road, Key West

Please join ELC staff, ELC Monroe board members and our community partners as we discuss important information of interest and concern to our early education and care provider community.

*Participation via school district videoconferencing is available at Marathon High School, Room 2106; and Coral Shores High School, Library Media Center Conference Room, Tavernier. To participate via conference call, the call-in number is 1-888-813-8477, passcode 143130.

2008 VPK Standards Training (*for new VPK instructors*)

Trainers: Val Taylor, Wesley House/Trina Rodriguez, Monroe ELC
Saturday, January 31, 2009; 1:00 - 4:00 p.m.
Wesley House, 1304 Truman Avenue, Key West
Please RSVP to Val Taylor at 809-5000

VPK Update Training (*for instructors who have already completed a VPK Standards Training*)

Upper Keys

(Trainings have already taken place)

Lower Keys

Trainers: Val Taylor, Wesley House/Trina Rodriguez, Monroe ELC
Saturday, January 31, 2009; 10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.
Wesley House, 1304 Truman Avenue, Key West
Please RSVP to Val Taylor at 809-5000

Monroe County Happenings

38th Annual Florida Keys Health Fairs

Saturday, January 24, 2009; 9:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.
Fisherman's Hospital in Marathon, Methodist and Baptist Churches on Big Pine, and Key West High School

FREE adult health services (including skin cancer screening, blood pressure, diabetes screening, vision testing, colon cancer screening, Pap smears, etc.) are available at all three locations. The health fairs are sponsored by the University of Miami Miller School of Medicine and Florida Keys AHEC.

*Note: Children's health evaluations are available at the Marathon and Key West locations. For more information, please call (305) 243-4898 or contact www.umdocs.org.

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