



Provider News Alert

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Issue 5

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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

President's Message



It's all about the economy these days. Even those of us who have not followed economic indicators in the past have now turned into amateur economists. We watch everything from the stock market to the price of commodities in the hopes of being the first to spot a trend that would signal the economic recovery we desperately anticipate. We also listen attentively to the analysts who have started to report that investors have been more optimistic in recent weeks due to increasingly positive news about the nation's economy. While Wall Street rallies are shortlived, the optimism that we share about our children, our community, our families and our country continues. We know that sooner or later we will see the light at the end of what has been a long, dark economic tunnel.

In the meantime, Florida is waiting to receive approximately \$105 million in early learning dollars as part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, also known as the Stimulus Package. The investment of these dollars will support the state's efforts to stimulate the economy by allowing working families to place or maintain their children in high quality early learning programs while they work.

Our state partner, the Agency for Workforce Innovation, is committed to allocating stimulus dollars to local communities as quickly as possible after they are received by the state. In Miami-Dade and Monroe Counties, every dollar received will be spent on supporting the children and families of our community and the work of early care and education providers. The number one priority will continue to be funding child care slots.

As you can well imagine, balancing the checkbook at the ELC is no easy feat and we, like everyone else, are concerned about sustainability after the stimulus dollars are gone. While we have the ability to open and close enrollment for the income eligible category (BG8), we do not have the same flexibility with the other categories. One example is the TANF category (BG3). To illustrate the balancing act that we must constantly perform to balance our budget: since the beginning of our fiscal year we have added almost 1,000 new TANF children to our rolls at a cost of over \$2.6 million additional dollars for that category. The numbers continue to increase daily. We are anticipating that the additional children and the less-than-average attrition rate in the School Readiness program will result in more children being served this year than last year. That is the good news, but now we have the challenge of paying for all these additional children.

To address the great need in our community and to continue to generate as many dollars as possible to serve the children and families of Miami-Dade and Monroe Counties, the following steps have been taken:

- Additional dollars have been requested from the state for utilization in the current fiscal year

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 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.

Upcoming Board & Committee Meetings

Finance
April 27 at 8:00 a.m.
ELC Board Room

Program & Strategy
April 29 at 1:00 p.m.
ELC Board Room

- Ongoing advocacy at the state level to ensure that the distribution of federal economic stimulus dollars to coalitions be expedited once received by the state
- Deferred expenditures in support areas to fund child care slots
- Sustained legislative advocacy efforts in Tallahassee to ensure that early learning dollars are protected from further reductions

Providing a high quality early education to the children and families of Miami-Dade and Monroe Counties and supporting the work of our early care and education providers continues to be our number one priority. We are grateful to our many partners and sincerely thank you for working side-by-side with the Coalition as we weather the economic storm and look forward to better times ahead.

Our partnership is: 1) making it possible for children to receive a high quality early education; 2) making it possible for parents to work with the reassurance and comfort that their children are in the good hands of our community's early care and education professionals; and 3) adding significant value to our state's economic development.

Please do not hesitate to let me know if there is anything I can do to support your important work.

I remain at your service.

Sincerely,

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

Important Announcements

Terri Lynne Lokoff/Children's TYLENOL® National Child Care Teacher Awards

The Terri Lynne Lokoff Child Care Foundation created the Terri Lynne Lokoff/Children's Tylenol National Child Care Teacher Awards to acknowledge the critical role of child care teachers in providing quality early care and education. Child care teachers from all 50 states and the District of Columbia are invited to apply. As part of the application process, each applicant is asked to design an enhancement project for the children in their classroom illustrating the educational, social, and emotional benefits of the project.

Applicants must be teachers of infant, toddler, or preschool age children, and may work at for-profit, nonprofit, or faith-based programs. Additionally they must be employed full-time in a home, group, or center program that is fully compliant with local and state regulations for operating child care programs.

Applicants must have also worked in their current regulated program for a minimum of 36 months by December 4, 2009, and have worked a minimum of 32 hours a week for 12 months at the same center. Teachers must be with the same children for ten (10) consecutive months.

For additional awards information and to view the 2010 application, visit http://www.tlccf.org/pr_nccta.php.

*Information on the Terri Lynne Lokoff/Children's Tylenol National Child Care Teacher Awards was taken from http://www.tlccf.org/pr_nccta.php and

http://foundationcenter.org/pnd/rfp/rfp_item.jhtml?id=246000035.

9th Annual

- Teen Anime Showcase
- Giant Puppet Shows
- Storybook Characters
- Music
- Arts & Crafts
- Face Painting
- Giveaways
- West Indian Carnival

the art of storytelling
International Festival

An exciting day of **FREE** storytelling events for the entire family!

Saturday **May 2** 2009
10:30 a.m. - 4 p.m.
Miami-Dade Public Library System
Main Library
101 W. Flagler St.
305.375.BOOK
FREE Admission & Parking

Family Child Care Home Providers - New Playground Requirements

Effective July 1, 2009, all family child care home providers are required to provide ground cover or other protective surfaces under permanent or stationary playground equipment. This requirement was added to protect the safety of children by reducing severe injuries to children when using the playground equipment.

With only three months left before enforcement of this requirement, the following resources are available to assist in your selection of an appropriate protective surface:

- ASTMI Playground Audit Guide which is available on the Department's website, www.myflorida.com/childcare, by selecting 'Provider Information,' then select 'Provider Guide Content Selections.'
- Outdoor Home Playground Safety Handbook (document number 324) which is available on the US Consumer Product Safety Commission website, <http://www.cpsc.gov/cpsc/pub/pubs/playpubs.html>.

For more information on ground cover and/or other protective surfaces, contact your local child care licensing office.

*Information was taken from the Florida Department of Children & Families' (DCF) "Family Day Care Home New Playground Requirements" flyer.

Working Parents May Benefit from the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC)

Tax Day (Wednesday, April 15, 2009) is only a few days away, and there is an important federal tax credit from which working parents may benefit as they file their income tax paperwork.

Working parents may be eligible for the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), which reduces the amount of federal taxes owed. The EITC is for those who earn less than \$42,000. If parents qualify, the credit could be worth up to \$4,800 this year, translating into a less expensive tax payment or even a potential refund. To determine if one is eligible for the EITC and/or to learn how to file it, visit <http://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/p596.pdf>.

To access the same information but in Spanish, visit <http://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/p596sp.pdf>.

Parents may also be eligible to receive some of the EITC in advance. 'Advance EITC' allows parents to retain a greater portion of their paycheck every month if they have at least one qualifying child. In order to do so, parents should complete Form W-5, available at the link below, and return it to their employer:

<http://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/fw5.pdf>.

The form is also available in Spanish: <http://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/fw5sp.pdf>.

For more information on the EITC, including FAQs in both English and Spanish, please visit <http://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/p3211esp.pdf>.

Additional EITC information and forms may be accessed at www.irs.gov/eitc.

ELC Board of Directors

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. In this issue, it is our pleasure to highlight Board Director Yesenia Perkins.



Yesenia Perkins graduated from Florida State University with a bachelor of science degree in finance. At the age of 19, she managed a three-acre, 80-unit apartment complex. Later she worked with real estate developers in overseeing the construction of a high-end condominium resort complex in Miami. She administered the \$50 million construction loan, created and managed the \$2 million condominium-association budget and fees, and served as the liaison between new buyers and construction supervisor.

Thereafter, for five years, Ms. Perkins managed and reconciled up to \$65 million in escrow accounts for a Key West title company. In the interim she helped create and financially administer four start-up companies including: Conch Republic Seafood Company, Picken Country Communications Radio 102.5, Drive-In Ltd. (townhouses), and Key West Diagnostics Ltd. Presently, Ms. Perkins is licensed as a transnational referral certified broker in Miami. In 2001 she was appointed by the Monroe County Commissioners to serve on the Early Learning Coalition of Miami-Dade/Monroe's board of directors. In her current role as the Coalition's treasurer, she administers \$171 million in State funds for both Miami-Dade and Monroe Counties.

Provider Representatives on the Board of Directors

Listed below are your representatives on the board of directors. If you have any questions or concerns, your respective representative may address them on your behalf:

*Representing private child care providers
Silvia La Villa, Ed.D.
Executive Associate Director, KIDCO Child Care
silvia@kidco-childcare.org

*Representing faith-based child care providers
Connie Chapell
Independent Education Consultant
cchapell@bellsouth.net

*Representing the program under the Disabilities Education Act
Daniel Armstrong, Ph.D.
Director, University of Miami Mailman Center for Child Development
darmstrong@miami.edu

Vacant Private-Sector Business Member Position on the Board of Directors

The Early Learning Coalition of Miami-Dade/Monroe currently has a vacancy on its board of directors for a private sector business member. Defined under Florida Statute 411.01(5)(7), an early learning coalition must appoint additional members from a list of nominees submitted to the coalition by a chamber of commerce or economic development council within the geographic region served by the coalition.

We have advertised the vacancy and contacted local chambers of commerce requesting that they nominate one of the applicants or name their own for consideration by our board of directors. The requirements for the private sector business member position are as follows--Candidate must reside in Florida and be one of the following individuals associated with a private-sector business entity conducting business in Miami-Dade or Monroe County:

- An owner having at least a 10% ownership interest in the business entity;
 - The CEO or COO of the business entity;
 - A business executive or employee of the business entity who is at the management level or higher with optimum policy making or hiring authority;
- or
- An individual who previously met one of the criteria aforementioned, but is retired from the business entity.

The candidate (or candidate's relative) must not be a child-care business owner or employee. If you or anyone you know meet these requirements, please contact your local chamber. The due date for chambers to submit nominations is Friday, May 8, 2009.

Team Member Spotlight

This month, the spotlight shines on another valued team member and the important work she accomplishes in bringing quality early childhood education to our community. In this issue, it is our pleasure to highlight **Sandra Ampudia**, Consultant, Inclusion & Assessment.

Sandra Ampudia joined the Coalition in March of 2004 and currently works as a consultant to the Inclusion & Assessment team. In her present capacity she serves as a literacy readiness coach for the Recognition & Response program, a collaborative initiative implemented 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, funded by the Emily Hall Tremaine Foundation, is research-based and utilizes mCLASS:Circle to assess, and

Read It Again! for intervention. The program is provided in 13 early care and education centers, serving 4-year-olds throughout Miami-Dade County in 16 classrooms total. In her key role, Sandra has been responsible for identifying children with learning difficulties, employing highly successful intervention strategies, and providing professional development to the staff of each center. Her care and dedicated work ethic have been significant to the success of the project, which has already received national recognition.

Sandra has worn many hats at the Coalition. In fact, according to her supervisor, Bethany Sands, Director of Inclusion & Assessment, "I think Sandy has participated in more activities at the Coalition than probably anyone else." In the few years that Sandra has worked for the Coalition she also served as an inclusion specialist for the NEED program; as a literacy facilitator and mentor for Project Upgrade-Breakthrough to Literacy, a program promoting literacy in 36 schools; and regularly collaborated on other Coalition-wide projects. Prior to her tenure at the Coalition, Sandra was a readiness specialist at Family Central, Inc., conducting LAP-D and DECA assessments on children, and providing technical assistance and training to child care providers.

Arriving in Miami in 1999 from her native Colombia, Sandra had to work her way back up the professional ladder. Having received her bachelor of arts degree in speech therapy from Manuela Beltran University in Bogota, Colombia, she began work in Hialeah as a preschool teacher. The experience, she says, has helped her relate to, and appreciate, the feelings and experiences of the teachers with whom she now trains and mentors.

Sandra has worked on behalf of children from ages zero to five for as long as she can remember; it's her passion. "The magic of this work touches the lives of so many people. Training teachers directly affects children and their families," she says.

A lover of music, Sandra plays the guitar as well as sings. Her 5-month-old Shih Tzu puppy, Lucky, is one of her biggest fans.

Our Partners

Much of our success is attributed to the contributions of our valued partners. After all, they play a key role in helping us bring high quality early care and education programs and services to our children. In this issue, it is our pleasure to highlight Wesley House Family Services (WHFS).



Wesley House Family Services (WHFS) is the Coalition's central agency in Monroe County. It was founded in 1927 by the Methodist Church as a settlement program for Key West's Cuban Community; this included a kindergarten to teach English to Cuban children and ease their transition to public school. Over the years the program expanded to include a variety of social, religious, educational and recreational services for Key West's diverse population.

In 1989, Wesley House signed a contract with the state to be the coordinating agency for all of Monroe County's subsidized child care services (School Readiness and education services). Since then, Wesley House has become a multi-faceted agency that provides a wide range of direct services to Monroe County children and families through a seamless system that includes, but is not limited to, early childhood programs, adoption, case management, and inclusion services.

For more information on Wesley House Family Services, visit <http://www.wesleyhouse.org>.

*Information about WHFS was taken from 'About Us' on their website at http://www.wesleyhouse.org/about_us.html.

Miami-Dade County News Briefs

School Readiness

The ASQ Screens our Children for Developmental Delays

Providers, we need your help! Please return your pending ASQs as soon as possible. If you need additional or updated age protocols please call (305) 270-2905 (south of Flagler Street) or (305) 953-6007 (north of Flagler Street).

The Agency for Workforce Innovation (AWI) mandates that every school readiness child be screened annually. To complete this task, the Coalition and community Assessment Task Force adopted the ASQ to be the screening tool of choice. Screenings help identify children who are at-risk or have developmental delays. Furthermore it helps teachers learn and understand the individual needs of each child. Screening results also assist in identifying classroom activities that enhance the development of children's skills.

Child Development Services (CDS) is responsible for implementation of the screening mandate. Please support them in this important undertaking.

Next time:

- Tips for completing the answer sheet
- Tips for returning ASQs

Project R.E.A.D.

As part of Project R.E.A.D., Hammocks Middle School students donated over 1,300 books to benefit the children served by the Coalition and Juvenile Justice Center.



Pictured from left to right are: Pete Cabrera, Principal, Hammocks Middle School; Alina Soto, Client Services Manager, Early Learning Coalition; and Mary Larrea, Director, Juvenile Justice Center

Access Online Information About the Children Enrolled in your Center

Providers, you may access the website,

<http://egvsys.metro-dade.com:1608/WWWSER/ggvt/cdsaw000.dia>, to view information about the children enrolled at your facility. In order to log onto the website, you must sign up and select a password by contacting Ed Nelson at (305) 514-6023 or via email at enelson@miamidade.gov.

You are encouraged to take advantage of the website to receive up-to-date information on the status of children at your center, including enrollment and termination dates.

Children's Day at the Park!

Location

Amelia Earhart Park
401 East 65th Street
Hialeah, Florida 33013

Date & Time

Friday, May 29, 2009; 9:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m.



Transportation

You are responsible for your own transportation

Cost

\$2 per student and \$2 per adult

Miscellaneous

- Snack lunches should be brought and labeled on the outside with your child's name and his or her teacher's name
- Volunteers will be on hand to assist with parking
- CDS must be apprised of all adult chaperones

Deadline

The registration form is due by Monday, May 4, 2009; it has already been sent under separate cover.

For questions regarding the field trip, please contact:

Sara Morales

Tel: (305) 514-6201 or 514-6000

Fax: (305) 514-6226

Please make checks payable to *Miami-Dade County, Board of County Commissioners*. They should be mailed to:

Child Development Services Bureau
2525 N.W. 62nd Street, 4th Floor
Miami, Florida 33147

Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) Updates

VPK Standards Training for April - May 2009

What's New in VPK*

Reference #180

April 23, 2009; 5:00 p.m.-7:00 p.m.

St. John the Apostle (Cafeteria)

479 E 4th Street, Hialeah 33010

Please park between the church and school, and enter the building through the

door north of the office door.

2008 VPK Education Standards**

Reference #168

May 7, 2009; 5:00 p.m.-8:00 p.m.
MDC Homestead Campus, Room G103
500 College Terrace

What's New in VPK*

Reference #170

May 21, 2009; 5:00 p.m.-7:00 p.m.
MDC Homestead Campus Room G103
500 College Terrace

All classes are taught in English and begin promptly at 5:00 p.m. Arrivals after 5:15 p.m. will not be allowed into the training. To register, visit <http://www.myflorida.com/childcare/> and select 'Training Requirements.'

*What's New in VPK is for VPK teachers and directors who have a 2005 VPK Standards book and a 2005 VPK Education Standards Certificate of Completion.

**2008 VPK Education Standards is for VPK teachers and directors who have never taken VPK Standards training.

Directions from the North to MDC Homestead Campus:

- Take Florida Turnpike south and exit at Campbell Drive (312 Street) (exit # 2)
- At light, make a left (heading west)
- After crossing over Highway US-1, drive through 3 lights (you will see Homestead Shopping Plaza on the left, with Winn Dixie, Bealls and Big Lots)
- Slow down after the 3rd light, turn left at English Avenue (Firestone); you will see a green MDC Homestead sign on the median
- Continue straight approximately one block, campus will be on left

Kindergarten Screening

Beginning with the 2009-10 school year, the new Florida Assessments for Instruction in Reading will replace the DIBELS™ measures of the kindergarten screening. The ECHOS™ will continue to be used through 2010-11. The items included in the kindergarten screening continue to be aligned with the VPK Education Standards. For additional information visit <http://www.fldoe.org/earlyLearning/FLKRS2009.asp>.

*Information was taken from the Florida Department of Education, Office of Early Learning's "What's Happening in VPK? March 2009" flyer.

VPK Registration Sites & Information for the 2009-2010 School Year

Children must be 4-years-old by September 1, 2009 to enroll in the VPK 2009-2010 School Year program.

Registration Sites

Miami Gardens Neighborhood Service Center
16405 NW 25th Avenue

Miami Gardens, Florida 33054

Frankie Shannon Rolfe Neighborhood Service Center
3750 South Dixie Highway
Miami, Florida 33133

Naranja Neighborhood Service Center
13955 SW 264th Street
Miami, Florida 33032

Dates and Hours of Operation

Monday - Friday (Starting May 18, 2009 throughout the school year)
8:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m.

Saturdays: May 16; June 13, 20; August 1, 8, and 15, 2009
9:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m.

*Please be mindful that we continue the VPK registration process throughout the year during regular hours.

NOTE--The line will be closed when all of the numbers for the amount of parents we can see during the scheduled hours have been given out. Parents are encouraged to register at any location of their choice (please see available hours). Services are rendered on a first-come, first-served basis. For more information, please call (305) 373-3521.

Monroe County News Briefs

Save the Date

The 17th Annual Wesley House Conference
Saturday, May 2, 2009; 7:30 a.m.-4:45 p.m.
Marathon High School, 350 Sombrero Beach Road, Marathon

This year's theme is "Teachers Light the Way." The keynote speaker is Shawn Brown of The Super Fun Show. Providers may earn up to seven (7) hours of in-service training. Workshops will focus on literacy, music and movement, behavior management, make-and-takes, nutrition, and more. Lunch is included in the registration fee.

*Note: The deadline to receive the Early Bird Registration discount fee of \$35 is April 17, 2009. The late registration fee is \$45.

For additional information or to request a registration form, please contact Laurie Dunn or Michele Morgan at (305) 809-5000.

Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) Updates

2009 VPK Summer Registration is Currently Underway

Children who have **not** previously participated in a VPK program and will be entering kindergarten in the upcoming 2009-2010 school year are eligible to participate in the Summer VPK program.

Parents may register at all Wesley House locations Keys-wide for the Summer VPK Program as follows:

Monday - Friday; 9:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m.: 1304 Truman Ave., Key West and 175

Wrenn Street, Tavernier

Tuesday & Thursday; 9:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m.: 2796 Overseas Hwy. Suite 202, Marathon

The Monroe County School District will be offering the VPK Summer Program from **June 10 - July 22, 2009; 7:45 a.m.-5:30 p.m.** Public school sites include: Poinciana School, Key West, Marathon High School, and Key Largo School. Parents are encouraged to register early. Parents must provide transportation.

2009-2010 VPK School Year Registration Round-Ups to Begin in Mid-April

Children must be 4-years-old on or before **September 1, 2009** to participate in the 2009-2010 VPK School Year Program.

Parents in the Middle and Upper Keys may register at the **Saturday, April 18, 2009**, registration round-ups as follows:

Key Largo Library, Tradewinds Shopping Center: 10:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m.

Marathon Library, 3251 Overseas Highway: 3:00 p.m.-5:00 p.m.

Ongoing registration for the VPK School Year Program begins **Monday, May 4, 2009** at all Wesley House locations from 9:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m.: Monday - Friday (Key West and Tavernier); Tuesday & Thursday (Marathon). *Evening hours available by appointment.

For additional information, please call (305) 296-5557 or (305) 809-5000.