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Upcoming Board and Committee Meetings

Board
Monday, Oct. 3
8:00 a.m.
Board Room

Program & Strategy
Tuesday, Oct. 25
3:30 p.m.
Board Room

Finance
Wednesday, Oct. 26

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ELC News Alert

Issue 9
September/October 2011

President's Message



Dear Friends:

I am very excited about a new challenge we have ahead of us that has the potential of significantly improving our state's early education system. Florida is now in the running to receive funding for education through the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge federal grant program, eligible for up to \$100 million.

To encourage this effort, on September 1, the Miami-Dade Board of County Commissioners approved legislation sponsored by Commissioner Barbara J. Jordan asking Governor Rick Scott to support Florida's application. The Association of Early Learning Coalitions, the Florida Children's Services Council and many other state partners have been hard at work to educate key decision makers on how Florida's children can benefit from the grant. To solidify Florida's eligibility to apply for the grant, the Joint Legislative Budget Commission approved Florida's acceptance of a \$3.4 million federal grant to establish a home visiting program for at-risk mothers. Without this action by members of our legislature, Florida would not have qualified to apply for the grant.

When Florida receives this award, we will be able to improve the quality of our early education programs and support for early education professionals. More children than ever will enter school with the basic building blocks needed for success in school and in life.

Please join me in thanking all state partners, members of our legislature and Governor Rick Scott for supporting Florida's efforts to improve our early care and education system. Children learn, parents work, and taxpayers get a high return on their investment!

Sincerely,

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

8:00 a.m.
Board Room

Audit
Wednesday, Oct. 26
9:00 a.m.
Board Room

For a complete list of
upcoming Coalition
meetings and events,
please visit our
website at
www.elcmdm.org.

Contact us

Miami-Dade
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Important Announcements

Commissioner Urges Governor and State Legislature to Apply for Race to the Top

The Miami-Dade Board of County Commissioners approved legislation by Commissioner Barbara J. Jordan asking Governor Rick Scott and the State Legislature to apply for federal grant funding through the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge. The \$500 million grant aims to reduce crime, strengthen national security and boost competition among the 50 states to invest in early education.

U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan and U.S. Health & Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius announced the competition this past May in order to increase investment into early education. The idea is to create better coordination, clearer learning standards and meaningful workforce development in early learning systems. States are being asked to increase the number and percentage of low-income and disadvantaged children in their high quality education programs; design and implement an integrated system of high quality learning programs and services; and ensure that any use of assessments conforms to the recommendations of the National Research Council's reports on early childhood.

"If the State of Florida is chosen for this grant, it has the potential to receive as much as \$100 million for a 3-year period starting in 2012 for early childhood education," Commissioner Jordan said.

Research proves the effectiveness and positive outcomes that quality early learning programs have on children. The Commission strongly urges the State and Governor Scott to apply for the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge.

You can find the entire press release on the [ELC Website](#). For more information on the grant, visit the [Department of Education's site](#).

Legislative Panel Approves Race to the Top Application

A \$3.4 million federal grant was approved on September 7 to establish a home visiting program for at-risk mothers. This action set the stage for Florida to apply for the U.S. Department of Education's Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge grant program. Florida's House and Senate budget committee approved the federal grant at the urging of Governor Rick Scott. The money awarded by Race to the Top could be used to better prepare young low-income and disabled children for school.

Florida's eligibility for the federal grant hinged upon the state establishing a home visiting program designed to target at-risk mothers, such as victims of domestic violence and teen mothers, and help guide them toward services that could help them or their children.

Florida faces tough competition for the grant, with 36 states and the District of Columbia also in the running. The winners will be announced in December. To read the complete story, visit [the Florida Courier](#).

New Department of Economic Opportunity to be Led by Dynamic Team



Department of Economic Opportunity Executive Director Doug Darling announced several appointments to the department's executive leadership team on September 12. Agency for Workforce Innovation Director Cynthia R. Lorenzo will take on the role of Chief Operating Officer of the new department.

The department will consist of four divisions led by following directors: Michelle Dennard, Division of Strategic Business Development; Tom Beck, Division of Community Development; Tom Clendenning, The Division of Workforce Services and Kevin Thompson, Chief Financial Officer. Five additional leadership positions were announced, including Chief of Staff, General Counsel and Inspector General.

"Florida is on the path to becoming a job-creation engine and the new Department of Economic Opportunity is a tremendous resource for achieving this goal," said Governor Scott.

The Department of Economic Opportunity was created during the 2011 Legislative Session in response to Governor Scott's priority of establishing a more unified approach and rapid response to job creation through consolidation of the state's development functions. The department becomes operational on October 1, 2011.

CEO Visits Kinder House Learning Center

Evelio Torres, President and CEO of the Early Learning Coalition of Miami-Dade/Monroe, was invited to visit the Kinder House Learning Center, a Quality Counts center in Miami. Susana Arbulu, the center's director, gave him a tour of the facility, introducing him to children in each of the classrooms. The high quality childcare center follows the Reggio Emilia Approach for learning. This education philosophy focuses on fostering relationships among children, teachers, parents and the community. It builds on the idea that each child has the desire to connect with others, to engage in learning, and to enter into a relationship with his or her environment.



Kinder House recently opened their facility to children in Kindergarten and First Grade. The Early Learning Coalition is proud to partner with providers in the ongoing effort to educate our communities' youngest citizens.

Upcoming Meetings Scheduled by the Miami Children's Initiative

The Miami Children's Initiative has scheduled the following meetings:



- Board of Trustees Business Meeting on Tuesday, September 27, to be held in Room 44.016 Greenberg Traurig 333 Avenue of the Americas (333 S.E. 2nd Avenue) Miami, FL 33131 at 2:00 p.m.
- Youth Advisory Committee, Thema Campbell/Chair on Thursday, September 29, to be held in the 4th Floor Conference Room of the Joseph Caleb Center, 5400 N.W. 22nd Ave. at 12:30 p.m.
- Finance Committee, Elaine Black/Chair on Tuesday, October 4, to be held in the 4th Floor Conference Room of the Joseph Caleb Center, 5400 N.W. 22nd Ave. at 4:30 p.m.
- Board of Directors, Annie Neasman/Chair on Tuesday, October 11, to be held in the 4th Floor Conference Room of the Joseph Caleb Center, 5400 N.W. 22nd Ave. at 6:00 p.m.

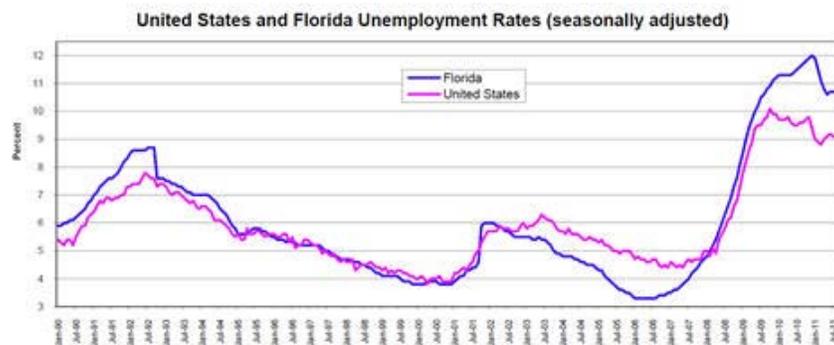
All are welcome to attend.

Florida Releases Its Employment Figures for August

The seasonally adjusted unemployment rate for the State of Florida in August 2011 is 10.7 percent, a rate 0.9 percent lower than the August 2010 rate. The unemployment rate is unchanged from July 2011. This number represents 987,000 jobless in a labor force of 9,201,000. Florida's nonagricultural employment increased 0.1 percent from July 2011.

"An increase of nearly 10,000 jobs since last month is another positive indication that Florida's employers are gaining confidence, people are getting back to work, and our state is making progress under Governor Scott's leadership," said AWI Director Cynthia R. Lorenzo.

The Department of Economic Opportunity was created in response to Governor Scott's priority of creating a more unified approach and rapid response to job creation in Florida. The DEO becomes operational on October 1.



Source: Florida Agency for Workforce Innovation, Labor Market Statistics Center, Local Area Unemployment Statistics Program, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics.

To read more about the current state of Florida's labor force, please visit floridajobs.org.

Meet the Board



Theresa Axford has worked with the Monroe County School District for 25 years. She earned her Bachelor's Degree from Nova Southeastern University in Administration and Supervision. In her time as an educator, Axford has worked as a teacher, assistant principal and principal in elementary, middle and secondary schools. Her work as Principal of Sugarloaf School helped the school maintain a consistent "A" grade. She was also Principal of Key West High School, gaining 33 points in the Florida School Grading Formula, attaining 90 percent of the criteria for Annual Yearly Progress and moving out of Correct II status in the State's Differentiated Accountability System.

In July 2011, Jesus Jara, Superintendent for Monroe County Schools, announced Axford as the new Executive Director for Operations. In this position, she oversees curriculum and instruction for 8,000 Monroe County students from Pre-K to Grade 12. Axford also holds a position on the Advisory Council for the Florida Keys Council of the Arts.

Thank you, Mrs. Axford, for taking the time to partner with the Early Learning Coalition!

MDC's Early Childhood Education Degree Program Approved

The Early Learning Coalition would like congratulate Miami Dade College's School of Education. The State Board of Education recently approved the college's Bachelor of Science in Early Childhood Education degree program in a unanimous vote.

MDC's Early Childhood Education Department boasts an excellent reputation, awarding more than 5,500 Child Development Associate Degrees and Florida Child Care Credentials in the past 30 years. This program has a commitment to research-based practices for teaching and learning. The implementation of this degree program means that all young children can finally receive high quality early education by providing our communities with well-educated and well-trained teachers ready to undertake this extraordinary task.

Congratulations, MDC! We anticipate great things in the future.



Children's Movement of Florida

The Children's Movement of Florida is a statewide, citizen-led, non-partisan campaign with the objective of educating political, business and civic leaders - and all parents in Florida - about the urgent need to improve the way we care for our children, making the well-being and education of our youngest and most vulnerable citizens, Florida's highest priority. To learn more about the movement, please visit www.childrensmovementflorida.org.

Team Member Spotlight



Sandra Gonzalez is celebrating almost four years with the Early Learning Coalition and her first anniversary as a Quality Assurance Director. In this role, Sandra ensures that the QA department conducts periodic monitoring of all its contracts. This enables the team to make sure providers are following policy according to ELC's contract, its attachments, Florida Statutes, Code, and Federal regulations. Sandra enjoys working together with the ELC team and partners to ensure that the best possible services are provided to children and families.

Sandra feels proud to work with a team that has one goal in mind: serving the children of Miami-Dade and Monroe. "The big picture is that no matter what position you have at the ELC, we are all working for one purpose."

Sandra joined the ELC after working in the Child Welfare System for nine years. She holds a Bachelor's Degree in Psychology and a Master's Degree in Youth and Childcare Administration. "Education is extremely important to me, and as a parent of three, I emphasize this to my children regularly," she said.

While away from the office, Sandra enjoys sharing all her free time with her husband and three children, Joshua, 10; Nicholas, 7; and Hannah, 4. The family enjoys visiting parks, beaches and playing in their backyard pool. When they have the chance to travel, they love visiting the mountains of Tennessee or North Carolina, going on cruises or visiting extended family in Colombia.

Monroe County News Briefs

School Readiness and VPK Child Health Screening Project Underway October - December

Florida Keys Area Health Education Center (Florida Keys AHEC), our community partner, will be providing free comprehensive child health screenings. This year, in addition to targeting approximately 425 School Readiness preschool children at 20 School Readiness centers and 28 family childcare homes, approximately 190 VPK children at 15 private VPK provider locations will be served Keys-wide. **As this is the initial year that VPK children will participate, private VPK providers are asked to encourage parents to carefully read the notification letters distributed by Florida Keys AHEC and refer to the contact information if they should have any questions about the health screening process.**

Financial assistance will be available for follow-up medical/specialty care for School Readiness and VPK children whose parents are uninsured or underinsured. **Non-subsidized private pay children may participate in the health screenings for a nominal \$10 fee.** Funding to serve the School Readiness child population is being made available by a grant to FKAHEC from the Human Services Advisory Board of the Monroe County Board of County Commissioners and through additional support from the ELC. Funding to serve the VPK child population was made available by a grant to the ELC from the Health Foundation of South Florida.

Save the Dates:

Lower Keys Health & Wellness Event

Thursday, October 6

8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.

Doubletree Grand Key Resort, Key West

Lower Keys Medical Center, Florida Keys AHEC, and local and state health agencies are among the sponsors of this one-day event. Free tests and screens include cholesterol, blood sugar, hemoglobin, blood pressure, weight and body fat analysis, skin cancer (face only), depression screenings, osteoporosis, breast health exams, smoking cessation, HIV and HEP C testing. To participate in the blood testing, it is important to fast 3-4 hours before coming to the event to ensure accurate cholesterol testing results. Lab testing will end at 5:00 p.m.

Lights on Afterschool Event

Thursday, October 20

3:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Bayview Park, Key West

Please join the Boys and Girls Club, Wesley House and the ELC to spotlight the importance of afterschool programs as part of the nationwide celebration. A brief ceremony will be held at 3:00 p.m. followed by food and many fun activities for the kids. All afterschool providers, parents, children and the entire community are encouraged to participate.

Wesley House Lower Keys Provider Mini-Conference

Saturday, November 5

Grace Lutheran School, 2713 Flagler Ave., Key West

Additional Details to Follow

*Note: An Upper Keys Mini-Conference is also being planned for Saturday, January 14, at the Murray Nelson Government Center in Tavernier.

Joint ELC Provider Services Committee and Monroe County Advisory Committee Meeting

Thursday, November 10

1:00 p.m.

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

Please join ELC Provider Services Committee board members, Monroe Advisory Committee board members, CEO Evelio Torres, ELC staff and our community partners as we discuss important information of interest and concern to our early education and care provider community. Provider participation is strongly encouraged in person, via conference call or via videoconferencing.

Reading is Fundamental (RIF) 1st Book Distribution

Week of November 14

The ELC is very pleased to sponsor three (3) book distributions during the 2011-2012 program year. Approximately 1,245 children (including subsidized and non-subsidized preschool children) at 20 centers and 28 family childcare homes will receive books to take home to build their personal libraries. Providers are reminded to start planning their literacy activities and contact the Monroe ELC office if they need assistance and/or resources. Also, please keep this office informed of any special events

planned during distribution week.

Quality Counts

QC Assembles New Technical Assistance Team

The Quality Counts Department has assembled an in-house team to support Family Child Care Homes. This team visits Family Child Care Homes participating in Quality Counts to provide technical assistance. The team also provides assistance to homes seeking accreditation. The ELC is proud to present them to you in the hopes of promoting and encouraging quality professional family childcare and facilitating the professionalism of providers in early learning environments.



Georgia Thompson is the new Quality Counts FCCH Technical Assistant Coordinator. Born in Kingston, Jamaica, and raised in Miami, Fla., she earned her Bachelor's Degree in Child Development from Florida State University. She is currently pursuing a Master's Degree in Human Services at Nova Southeastern University. Georgia's past jobs include positions at the Educational Research Center for Child Development, a Department of Children and Families, Miami Dade County Public Schools, and a grant funded tutoring program called Project HOPE in collaboration with the University of Miami and 21st Century. As a child advocate, she really values education, particularly in early childhood.

"I believe early childhood education sets the foundation for creating our future leaders," Georgia said. "It is my pleasure to join an organization and team that puts children first and shares my values. I look forward to being a team member and collaborating with others in a program that works to improve the early education of children in our local community."

Renata Cunha Lossano joins the ELC as an FCCH Technical Assistant. Renata holds a Bachelor's Degree in Science and Education from University of Sao Paulo (USP), an Infant/Toddler Specialization from Miami Dade College, and is currently pursuing a Master's Degree in Elementary Education at Nova Southeastern University.

"I believe that education is not only to teach the facts, but also to help children to discover their uniqueness and teach them how to develop it and give it away, making a difference in their community," Renata said. "During the learning process, the teacher is the role model, the counselor, the friend, the sailor who drives the boat; but the conductors are the children, who can take the boat to several places in different ways, where the end of the trip is always the same: knowledge."

Lucretia Jones is an FCCH Technical Assistant. She attended Bethune-Cookman University, obtaining a Bachelor of Science Degree in Educational Studies with a focus in the Social Sciences. Her experience includes teaching at Paragon Elementary Charter School and working closely with mentorship and assessment of the Environment Rating Scales at the Early Learning Coalition of Flagler and Volusia Counties.

"As an advocate of quality education and the well being of children, I believe that early childhood education is an essential part of our community and our future," Lucretia said. "I am excited about working with family childcare providers. Our collaborations and efforts to improve and sustain quality for our children will establish limitless success."

Originally from Honduras, **Kenia Najera** joins the team as an FCCH Technical Assistant. She has been in the field of early childhood education for more than a decade, first as a preschool teacher and then as a classroom mentor working with childcare centers in Miami-Dade County. As an educational advisor for the last four years, she has worked closely with early childhood practitioners to enhance and support their professional development.

"I believe that all young children deserve high quality programs that prepare them with the abilities and skills to success for academics and for life," Kenia said. "As the old proverb says, it takes a village to raise a child!"

Early education. Lifelong success.

