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## Upcoming Board and Committee Meetings

Provider Open Forum  
Conference Call  
Thursday, Feb. 16  
10:00 a.m.

Finance  
Thursday, Feb. 23  
8:00 a.m.

Audit

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# ELC News Alert

Issue 2  
February 2012

[President's Message](#)



Dear Friends:

On January 24, I had the opportunity of presenting before the State Board of Education. My main objective was to offer a local perspective on a number of important issues that impact early care and education programs in Miami-Dade and Monroe counties. Shaleen Fagundo, owner of the Interamerican Learning Center and a private provider representative on the Early Learning Coalition's Board of Directors, joined me in addressing these issues. Our focus was on the

Voluntary Prekindergarten Program. Specifically, we addressed provider finances, the challenges of serving English Language Learners and children with disabilities, and the need for pre- and post-assessments.

I reassured the Board that childcare providers and Early Learning Coalitions want to be part of a system that allows us opportunities to enrich learning experiences for all children. However, under the current measurement system and in the absence of pre- and post-assessments, some providers may be unintentionally labeled as "low performing." Serving children with high-needs should not cause providers to be placed on probation. We all know that many children make significant gains in our early learning programs, even if they are still not quite ready when they enter Kindergarten because they were so behind when they entered these programs in the first place.

I asked the Board of Education to consider the diversity of our state. Sometimes even our best intentions may have just the opposite effect if we do not listen closely to those who work in the front lines serving children in our unique and diverse Florida communities.

Sincerely,

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

***NOTE: Please refer to the Legislative Updates sidebar for important information that may affect your business.***

Thursday, Feb. 23  
9:00 a.m.

Program & Strategy  
Tuesday, Feb. 28  
1:00 p.m.

For a complete list of  
upcoming Coalition  
meetings and  
events,  
please visit our  
website at  
[www.elcmdm.org](http://www.elcmdm.org).

## Legislative Updates

### Capitol Connection

Check this page for  
weekly updates during  
the Regular Legislative  
Session.

## Contact us

**Miami-Dade**  
2555 Ponce de Leon Blvd.,  
5th Floor  
Coral Gables,  
FL 33134  
305.646.7220  
305.447.1608 (fax)

**Monroe**  
1100 Simonton Street,  
Suite 1-204  
Key West,  
FL 33040  
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305.296.5588 (fax)

[www.elcmdm.org](http://www.elcmdm.org)

Join Our Mailing List!

# Important Announcements

## Celebrate Black History Month

Each February is a chance for us to celebrate Black History Month and an opportunity to emphasize the history and achievements of African-Americans. Black History Month is an occasion for teachers and parents to share the stories of influential and prominent figures like Martin Luther King Jr., Maya Angelou, Frederick Douglass and Rosa Parks with their children. Most importantly, it is a chance to promote the ideals of equality and freedom on which our country was created.

Here are a few resources for educators to use during the month of February:

- We Give Books: This site offers a collection of stories related to Black History Month. Read about the struggle for human rights, the first black pilot to fly across the country and the courage of one woman who would not give up her bus seat. For every book read on this website, We Give Books donates a book to children in need.
- EducationWorld: Visit this website for a list of ideas for lesson plans centered around Black History Month. Learn how to coordinate scavenger hunts, uncover stories from the Underground Railroad and bring to life the stories of the past.
- TeacherVision: This website provides worksheets, coloring pages, biography lists and art activities for children in grades Kindergarten to eighth grade.

## Help the ELC Raise Funds through TICKETS fore CHARITY

This is your last chance to help the Early Learning Coalition raise funds through TICKETS fore CHARITY to continue providing the children of Miami-Dade and Monroe with the best educational opportunities possible.



The Early Learning Coalition is participating in the TICKETS fore CHARITY program, a unique fundraising initiative designed to improve the quality of life for children and families in the communities where PGA TOUR and Champions Tour tournaments are held.

By purchasing tickets to this event, you will be directly affecting the funding of programs through the Early Learning Coalition. One hundred percent (100%) of the proceeds of tickets bought on behalf of the ELC will come straight back to our organization.

Single day tickets are \$20.00. Weeklong Clubhouse tickets are \$85.00.

To order tickets, visit [Ticketmaster.com](http://Ticketmaster.com). The promotional code for the ELC is CCENV9V. Please note that the code is case sensitive. The final date to purchase tickets is March 1.

For more information, please contact Christina Vila at [cvila@elcmdm.org](mailto:cvila@elcmdm.org) or 305-646-7220 ext. 266.

### Join the *Let's Move! Child Care Challenge*



Join Florida's Office of Early Learning in the *Let's Move! Child Care Challenge* to help end childhood obesity. Let's Move! Child Care is an effort to promote children's health by encouraging and supporting healthier physical

activity and nutrition practices for children in child care. With more than 20 percent of children between the ages of 2 and 5 overweight or obese, the child care community is an essential ally in the effort to prevent childhood obesity, support children's healthy development, and prevent the occurrence of late chronic disease.

Your organization can participate in the challenge by setting goals to:

- Increase physical activity
- Reduce screen time
- Improve food choices
- Provide healthy beverages
- Support infant feeding

For more information and to register for the challenge, please visit their [website](#).

### ASQ-3 Online System Up and Fully Implemented

Providers may now submit ASQ-3 results online. This process ensures you will never be late or delinquent in submitting each child's assessment.

As stated on Page 10 of the Provider Agreement, each child must receive an annual screening. These ASQ-3 screenings must be completed and submitted by the end of each child's birth month. After this deadline has passed, you are considered delinquent in fulfilling the Provider Agreement responsibility.

If you need assistance with the online system, please call Evelyn Jordan at 305-514-6098.

If you still need an ASQ-3 kit, please come by the Early Learning Coalition between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. daily to pick up your kit. We are located at 2555 Ponce de Leon Blvd., Coral Gables, Fla., 33134.

For further information, please call Bethany Sands at 305-803-1272.

### Change a Child's Life through the Guardian ad Litem Program



The Florida Guardian ad Litem (GAL) Program, a partnership of community advocates

and professional staff, is looking for volunteers to advocate on behalf of Florida's abused and neglected children.

A GAL is a volunteer appointed by the court to protect the rights and advocate the best interests of a child involved in a court proceeding. Volunteers are individuals who respect a child's inherent right to grow up with dignity in a safe environment that meets the child's best interests and who assure that the child's best interests are represented in the court at every stage of the case. There are no special qualifications required of those who wish to volunteer, only concern for the well-being of children and a continued commitment to advocate for a child until they obtain a place in a safe and permanent home.

Please watch the [2-minute Public Service Announcement](#) and then visit <http://guardianadlitem.org/> to learn more about becoming a volunteer. Your care and concern may change a child's world for the better.

### MDC Names Its State of the Art Pre-School Lab



Miami Dade College's School of Education officially named its pre-school lab on January 18. The Exploration Station: The Pre-School at Miami Dade College is one of the only science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM)-focused pre-schools in Miami-Dade County. The center houses 100 children from age 1 to prekindergarten and serves as a demonstration site for students pursuing degrees in early childhood education.

The Exploration Station Pre-School is located at MDC's North Campus and operated by faculty and staff from the InterAmerican Campus. Children will have the chance to build on a traditional curriculum by tending to their very own garden. This will allow students to learn about environmental sustainability, how to care for plants and herbs, good nutrition and healthy eating habits.

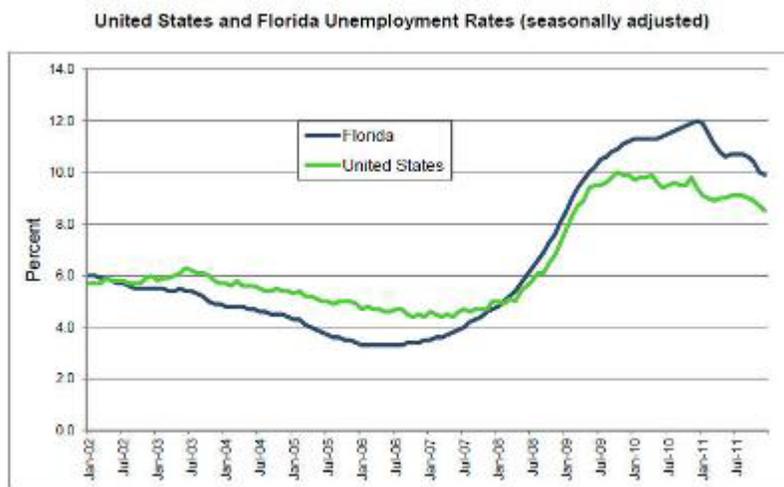
Evelio Torres, President and CEO of the Early Learning Coalition of Miami-Dade/Monroe, attended the naming ceremony. He joined Dr. Gina Cortes-Suarez, president of MDC's InterAmerican Campus; Dr. Jose A. Vicente, president of MDC's North Campus; and other notable community figures. Nine pre-school children held up large letter cards, revealing the school's official name.

To learn more about the naming ceremony, view the story on our [website](#). For more information about MDC's School of Education or the Exploration Station Pre-School Lab, contact Dr. Susan Neimand at 305-237-6152 or [sneimand@mdc.edu](mailto:sneimand@mdc.edu).

### Florida Releases Its Employment Figures for December

The Florida Department of Economic Opportunity announced on January 20 that Florida's unemployment rate has declined to 9.9 percent, the lowest since April 2009 when it was 9.7 percent. Since Governor Rick Scott took office in January, the state's

unemployment rate has dropped 2.1 percentage points compared to the peak of 12.0 percent in December 2010.



Source: Florida Department of Economic Opportunity, Labor Market Statistics Center, Local Area Unemployment Statistics Program, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics.

The number of jobs created by Floridians is now nearly 114,000 over the year, an increase of 1.6 percent from December 2010. The number of jobs created nationally only grew 1.3 percent during the same period.

"Florida continues to see gains in its private sector job creation and a decrease in our unemployment rate - now down to single digits," said Governor Rick Scott. "Working with the Florida Legislature to create the strongest economy in the nation, I am focused on eliminating burdens on businesses and improving our workforce development efforts to attract needed jobs that can help Floridians get back to work and aid in our economic recovery."

To view the complete press release, please visit [www.floridajobs.org](http://www.floridajobs.org).

*\*Source: Florida Department of Economic Opportunity (DEO) press release, 'Florida's Unemployment Rate Falls Below 10.0 Percent for the First Time in More than Two and a Half Years' - January 20, 2012; 10:00 A.M.\**

### Children's Week Event Brings Families to the Miami Children's Museum



On Jan. 20, the Early Learning Coalition and the Miami Children's Museum collaborated on an event for Children's Week, a statewide celebration that aims to raise awareness for children's issues and call attention to the events taking place in Tallahassee from Jan. 29 to Feb. 3. Along with more than 15 community partners, the ELC distributed information to more than 1,100 people who attended the event.

Displayed around the museum were pieces of art submitted by centers across the county. The majority of the artwork received was sent to the State Capitol to be displayed during their events. Thank You to all the providers who sent hand artwork. We sincerely appreciate the enthusiasm and creativity you showed in creating each piece.

To view photos from the event, visit the [ELC's Facebook page](#).

## RIF Book Distributions Bring Out Guest Readers



In January, the Early Learning Coalition and [Reading Is Fundamental](#) collaborated to bring free books to children across Miami-Dade and Monroe. Through this program, we will deliver more than 87,000 books to 28,288 children at more than 400 sites across both counties.

On January 31, the children and staff of Centro Mater West in Hialeah Gardens welcomed Carmen Dominicci, a Telemundo news anchor, to read with them. The class joined her in reading "El

Raton Vaquero."

Thank You to the teachers and students at Centro Mater West for opening your doors to the Early Learning Coalition. A special thank you for being our partners in promoting early literacy initiatives like Reading Is Fundamental.

To view more photos and a video from the event, please visit the [ELC's Facebook page](#).

## Open Forum Conference Call

We have an exciting opportunity for you to interact with Provider Representatives sitting on the Early Learning Coalition's Board of Directors. We have scheduled monthly conference calls for providers to voice their concerns, ask questions or get to know their Board Representatives. This is a chance to build a comfortable working relationship with the incredible people collaborating with the ELC to bring quality educational opportunities to all children in Miami-Dade and Monroe.

Please join us on the following days:

**Thursday, February 16**  
10:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.

**Thursday, March 22**  
10:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.

**Thursday, April 12**  
10:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.

To join the calls, please dial our conference line at 786-389-5135 or 866-502-2994. When prompted for the code, dial 802#.

For more information, please contact Christina Vila at 305-646-7220 ext. 266.

## The Florida Core Competencies for Early Childhood and Education Practitioners is coming!

Palm Beach State College, as directed by the Department of Economic Opportunity Office of Early Learning, has developed a series of competencies for Early Childhood Professionals. The Core Competencies for Practitioners (teachers and teacher assistants) defines what one needs to know and be able to do in the classroom to facilitate optimal child growth and development and collaborate with families. The competencies include expectations for entry-level teachers as well as teachers with CDAs, degrees and extensive experience. The Core Competencies are just one piece of Steps to Success, the State's developing Professional Development System.

Palm Beach State College has requested the Early Learning Coalition of Miami-Dade/Monroe, along with 7 other coalitions, to pilot the revised professional development model before it is implemented state-wide.

Miami-Dade and Monroe counties will be piloting the model on several fronts. The implementation will include coursework, career advising and navigating the Registry System. The Children's Forum Career Center will be piloting the "Director-Led Career Advising Model" under the direction of Rose Marie Inserni.

Topics for Face-to-Face Training within the Pilot are:

- Meeting Children's Needs - Registration through Miami Dade College
  - Miami Dade College
    - March 19, 26, Apr 2, 9 - Spanish
    - March 16, 23, 30, Apr 6 - English
- Developmentally Appropriate Practice - For registration, contact Amber Keller at [akeller@elcmdm.org](mailto:akeller@elcmdm.org).
  - ELC of Miami-Dade/Monroe - Monroe County
    - May 8, 10, 15 - Upper Keys
    - May 5, TBD, TBD - Lower Keys
- Observing Children - Registration: <http://www.qccareers.org/calendar.php>
  - United Way Center for Excellence
    - March 6, 8, 13, 15 - English
    - May (TBD) - Spanish

Kerry Allen and Carol Brogan from the ELC will be conducting an online course entitled "Healthy Children." Teachers will receive #CEUs for completing the coursework. If you are interested in registering for face-to-face courses, please register as indicated above. If you are interested in participating in the online training, contact Kerry Allen at 305-646-7220 x 239.

## Request for Expressions of Interest for Head Start Program Services

**Request for Expressions of Interest**  
**Request for Expressions of Interest**  
**For**  
**Head Start Program Services**

Miami-Dade County will delegate the operation of County operated Head Start/Early Head Start Program sites. As such, Miami-Dade County is requesting Expressions of Interest (REOI) from qualified interested parties to provide Head Start Program services.

**POTENTIAL PROVIDERS OF HEAD START SERVICES MUST COMPLETE THE EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST IN THE MANNER AND FORM SET FORTH IN THE REOI/FA DOCUMENTS AS A CONDITION TO APPLY AND BE CONSIDERED FOR A COUNTY CONTRACT. CONTRACTING, LEASING AND SUBLEASING FOR HEAD START SERVICES WILL BE SUBJECT TO APPROVAL BY ENTITIES OTHER THAN MIAMI-DADE COUNTY. THE COUNTY GIVES NO ASSURANCES THAT SUCH APPROVALS WILL BE GRANTED.**

Delegate Agencies currently receiving funding from the Head Start Program must submit a response to the REOI if interested in continuation of funding and partnering with the Head Start Program.

**Request for Expressions of Interest Documents will be available on:**  
 February 6, 2012 online at [www.miamidade.gov/dpm](http://www.miamidade.gov/dpm)

**COUNTY CONTACT:**  
 Name and Title: Maria Carbalreira, Procurement Contracting Officer  
 Address: 111 NW 1st Street, Suite 1300, Miami, Florida 33128  
 Telephone: (305) 375-5683  
 E-Mail: [mc5@miamidade.gov](mailto:mc5@miamidade.gov)

**RESPONSES TO THIS REOI ARE DUE NO LATER THAN**  
 February 29, 2012 at 2:00 PM (local time)  
 at  
 CLERK OF THE BOARD  
 Stephen P. Clark Center  
 111 NW 1st Street, 17th Floor, Suite 202  
 Miami, Florida 33128-1983

## Office of Early Learning Holds Open House



On February 1, Florida's Office of Early Learning (OEL) held an Open House in Tallahassee. The event featured a ribbon cutting ceremony and program presentations to officially introduce the OEL. Programs discussed included Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) Education, School Readiness and Child Care Resource and Referral. Dr. Mel Jurado, director of the OEL, welcomed local dignitaries, stakeholders and citizens, including Gov. Rick Scott and ELC Board Chair Octavio Verdeja.

## Children's Movement of Florida



### Volunteers Needed for Health Initiative

Join The Children's Movement of Florida in making a better future for children. The Movement needs volunteers, caring individuals to assist with KidCare outreach and application assistance efforts in Miami-Dade County. The few hours you can commit to its collective efforts can be what is needed to make an incredible

difference in ensuring more children have access to health insurance.

Florida KidCare, our state's health insurance program for children without private insurance, is a top priority for The Movement. Many parents do not know that their children are eligible or may not know how to enroll in the program. As a volunteer, you will assist The Movement in distributing KidCare materials and/or assist in enrolling children.

For more information and to sign up as a volunteer, visit The Children's Movement Health Care Initiative's [website](#).

## Team Member Spotlight



Fiorella "Fio" Altare joined the Early Learning Coalition's Quality Counts team in 2007. She had worked as a consultant to the Coalition since 2004 through Florida International University's Impact Miami program. Fio works as the ELC's Fiscal Analyst, managing the budget, providing incentives and award letters to providers and putting orders together for approval.

"She is the most conscientious, punctual, diligent and organized person I have ever had the privilege to work with," said Karen Molinario, who has worked with Fio for many years. "No matter how 'full her plate' might be, she is always willing to lend a hand to help the ELC team. When assigned any project or task, she is productive, thorough, and goes above and beyond to see it to completion."

Because of her dedication to the Early Learning Coalition, Fio earned a CEO Award this past year, a very important moment for her. Other distinguished accomplishments include helping to plan, design and implement a Quality Materials Initiative for 1,100 early learning providers. This initiative provided equipment and materials essential in enhancing the quality of learning experiences for children in early learning programs. Fio holds an associate degree in Early Childhood Education from Miami Dade College and is currently working toward attaining a bachelor's degree in the same field at FIU. To her, education is paramount to future success, helping individuals gain knowledge and build opinions. Making a difference in the lives of children is very rewarding for Fio. She believes she was put on this earth to advocate for children.

On her time away from the office, Fio enjoys spending time with her family, especially with her nieces and nephews. They love going to parks, reading and attending play dates together.

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## Monroe County News Briefs

### Alan Eckstein Honored at "Unsung Heroes" Luncheon

Early Learning Coalition Board Member Alan Eckstein was honored as the ELC's Volunteer of the Year at the Community Foundation of the Florida Keys' annual "Unsung Heroes" luncheon. This event is an opportunity for Monroe County nonprofits to honor those who have made valuable contributions of their time, energy and talents.

Alan's nomination read as follows: "Attorney and child advocate, Alan Eckstein has served on the ELC Board since 2006, chairing the By-Laws Committee and Monroe Advisory Committee. He also serves as local chair of The Children's Movement of Florida. Alan enjoys volunteering in character as a guest reader at ELC sponsored literacy events at early education centers."

Thank you Alan for all you do for our children and families!



### Kreative Kids Christian Academy Hosts Children's Week Event

Kreative Kids Christian Academy in Marathon hosted a Children's Week community awareness event. Special guests included Monroe County Commissioner George Neugent; Marathon City Council Vice Mayor Dick Ramsey; Monroe County Sheriff Department Colonel Rick Ramsey; and Florida League of Christian Schools Executive Director Michael Burroughs from Lakeland, Fla.



Director Karen MacCrory presided over the celebration, which included a singing performance by the children. In her remarks, she addressed the importance of quality early care and education for the benefit of children, working parents and the community as a whole.

Michael Burroughs, Executive Director of FLOCS, commended Karen MacCrory for her work in achieving accreditation and maintaining high standards of quality. Several parents, including local businesspersons whose children attend Kreative Kids, spoke to the reassurance of knowing that their children were in a welcoming and enriching learning environment.

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## Quality Counts

From the Desk of Suzette Frazier, Regional Safety Program Manager Department of Children and Families Child Care Licensing

*This section of the News Alert is designed to inform and remind providers of the licensing requirements of the Department of Children and Families. This licensing corner is a new and innovative way for providers to stay connected to childcare licensing and will serve as a guide to new regulations, information about recalls, licensing updates and much more!*

This Q & A session was taken from a recent Florida Association for the Education of Young Children (FLAEYC) and DCF Child Care Program Office (CCPO) conference call. It contains several Frequently Asked Questions that may be beneficial to providers.

**Q: Children with severe allergies may need EPI pens. What is the regulation on these pens? Where should the pens be kept and what type of authorization needs to be in place?**

**A:** The EPI pen is medication and must be handled according to 65C-22.004(3), F.A.C. Written authorization from the child's parent/legal guardian must be provided before medication is dispensed. Additionally, the facility must maintain a record each time a child is given medicine at the facility; this record must include the child's name, name of medication, the date, the time the medication was dispensed, the dosage or amount, and the name of the person dispensing the medication. Medication must have a child restraint cap, if applicable, and shall either be stored in a locked area out of the reach of children. The use of an EPI apron is allowable as long as when it is not being worn it is stored in a place inaccessible to the children. During field trips,

allergy medication and authorization forms should also be available.

**Q: Are there any regulations on Social Security numbers in children's files? Do we need to obtain SS numbers at all?**

A: No, the Social Security number may be captured on the child's immunization record; however, this field is optional. If social security numbers are captured, keep in mind that this information is confidential and must be kept private. Providers may also redact social security numbers using black ink.

**Q: Can a teacher be a lead teacher if they only have their 40 hours, and the assistant has at least a CDA?**

A: For the purposes of licensing, all childcare personnel must complete 40 hours of training plus 5 hours of Early Literacy training. The total number of credentialed staff is based on a 1:20 ratio throughout the facility. It is not a requirement that each classroom have a credentialed staff member assigned. Credentialed staff members do not have to be the lead teacher.

For more answers, please view the complete list on our [website](#).

### Quality Counts is Evolving Into New Model: Quality Counts 2.0

In April 2012, the Quality Counts program will begin to implement the QC 2.0 model. Plans to implement Quality Counts 2.0 are well underway. The evolution of Miami-Dade County's nationally recognized quality rating improvement system retains many of its key features: fully voluntary, inclusive of all early childhood programs, an array of supports to help providers reach quality improvement goals and tools to help providers market their programs in the community.

While still fully voluntary, the new and improved Quality Counts will allow for access by ALL programs in the county who meet entrance criteria, thus eliminating the long waiting lists currently in effect. Additionally, Quality Counts 2.0 will feature a targeted focus on programs and children in our county's most vulnerable neighborhoods with supports specially tailored to meet this unique need.

The Quality Counts 2.0 standards have been developed with an eye to local and national benchmarks and have received strong support from the provider community thus far. (Please see calendar for Quality Counts 2.0 Standards Overview Training.) Some new and exciting features of Quality Counts 2.0 include:

- Licensing compliance support
- Cultural competence and intentional family engagement
- Health promotion
- Credit for Gold Seal Accreditation
- Florida Steps to Success Professional Development pathways

A new classroom assessment tool known as Pre-K CLASS™ (Classroom Assessment Scoring System) will be implemented in classrooms serving children ages 3 and up. The ITERS-R environmental assessment remains the central assessment tool for classrooms serving children birth to 36 months.

If you are interested in learning more about the new process and assessment tool, please sign up for a training session. Sessions on these standards will be carried out twice a month to ensure that all providers are aware of and understand the new process. Pre-K CLASS™ training will be provided as well. Calendar information will be available on the ELC newsletter and website. Stay tuned for more information about

training dates and location.

For more information, please call the Quality Counts line at 305-646-7242, or e-mail your questions and/or comments to [qualitycounts@elcndm.org](mailto:qualitycounts@elcndm.org).

Early education. Lifelong success.

