



## In This Issue

[Important Announcements](#)

[Children's Movement of Florida](#)

[Team Member Spotlight](#)

[Monroe County News Briefs](#)

[Quality Counts](#)

## Quick Links

[Early Learning Coalition VPK](#)

[Department of Economic Opportunity](#)



## Upcoming Board and Committee Meetings

Provider Open Forum  
Conference Call  
Tuesday, Jan. 10  
10:00 a.m.

Finance  
Tuesday, Jan. 24  
8:00 a.m.

Program & Strategy  
Tuesday, Jan. 31  
1:00 p.m.

[Forward to a Friend](#)

[Donate Now](#)

# ELC News Alert

Issue 1  
January 2012

[President's Message](#)



Dear Friends:

The Florida Legislature will be coming together for the 2012 Legislative Session beginning on January 10. This year will come with its own set of challenges, including a \$2 billion dollar budget shortfall and the very complicated redistricting discussions.

As you know, Governor Scott and the Florida Chamber supported Florida's Race to the Top application. Although Florida was not awarded the grant, we fully anticipate that the Governor and the business community will continue to support our collective efforts to improve Florida's early care and education system. Our challenge is to make sure all members of the legislature understand the benefits, costs and return on investment of a high-quality early education. We can do this by continuing our legislative advocacy and education efforts. Please make sure you remain involved and take advantage of the legislative advocacy trainings. Information on the 2011 Session can be found on the Legislative Updates section of our website.

Sincerely,

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

## Important Announcements

[Help the ELC Raise Funds through TICKETS fore CHARITY](#)



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

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

## 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  
305.296.5557  
305.296.5588 (fax)

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

Join Our Mailing List!

organization.

To order tickets, download the [order form](#) or visit [Ticketmaster.com](http://Ticketmaster.com). The promotional code for the ELC is CCENV9V. Please note that the code is case sensitive.

### 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](#).

### 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.

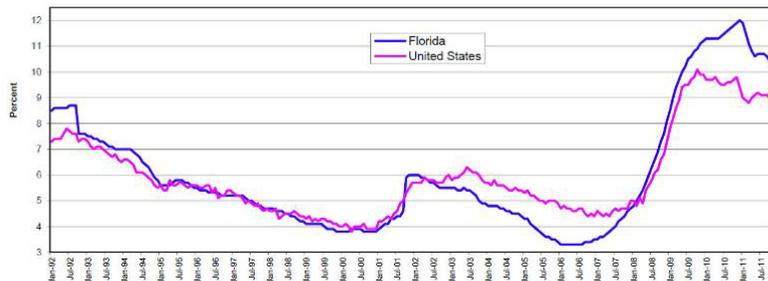
A GAL is a volunteer appointed by the court to protect the rights and advocate the best interests of a child involved in a court proceeding. Volunteers are individuals who respect a child's inherent right to grow up with dignity in a safe environment that meets the child's best interests and who assure 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.

## Florida Releases Its Employment Figures for November

The seasonally adjusted unemployment rate in November 2011 was 10.0 percent, the lowest since May 2009. Florida's unemployment rate was down 0.4 percentage points from October 2011 and 1.9 percentage points lower than the November 2010 rate of 11.9 percent. There was a 0.1 percent increase in the number of nonagricultural jobs from October 2011, with more than 8,500 jobs created. Nationally, the number of jobs increased by 1.2 percent over the year. Statewide, that increase was 1.4 percent.

United States and Florida Unemployment Rates (seasonally adjusted)

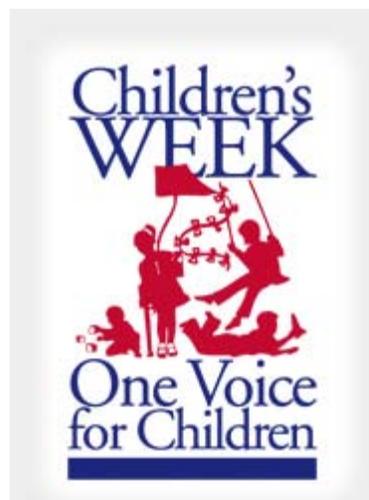


Source: Florida Department of Economic Opportunity, Labor Market Statistics Center, Local Area Unemployment Statistics Program, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics.

To read more about the current state of Florida's labor force, please visit [www.floridajobs.org](http://www.floridajobs.org).

*\*Source: Florida Department of Economic Opportunity (DEO) press release, "Florida's November Employment Figures Released - December 16, 2011; 10:00 A.M."*

## Join us in Celebrating Children's Week 2012



On Friday, January 20, the Early Learning Coalition, the Miami Children's Museum and more than 10 other community partners will be hosting a fun and informational event for the entire family. This event is a part of the Children's Week celebrations, which raise awareness for children's issues and call attention to the events taking place in Tallahassee from January 29 to February 3, 2012. Stop by between 3:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m. for story time with the Miami Fire-Rescue, free fingerprinting, VPK Registration and many more activities.

The Miami Children's Museum is located at 980 MacArthur Causeway, Miami, FL, 33132.

Admission to the event and parking at the museum are free.

For more information about our event, contact [Yesenia Reyes](#). For more information on statewide celebrations for Children's Week, please visit their [website](#).

*If you or anyone you know is planning a special event in celebration of Children's Week, please share it with us. You may send this information to Yesenia Reyes.*

## RIF Book Distributions Bring Out Guest Readers

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

On December 8, the children and staff of AcadeMir Preschool in Miami welcomed Latin Grammy Winner Melina Leon and Premio Lo Nuestro Nominee J'Martin to read stories with them. Both stars gave

impromptu performances to those present. On December 14, Ana Patricia Gonzalez, Nuestra Belleza Latina 2010, visited Camp Carnival Child Development Center in Doral. The VPK class at Camp Carnival joined her in reading "Muy Bien Ferguson." Despierta America, a morning talk show on Univision, taped a segment to air on the show.



Thank You to both centers for opening their 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 from both events, 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 just 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:

**Tuesday, January 10th**  
10:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.

**Tuesday, February 14th**  
10:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.

**Tuesday, March 20th**  
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 Leana Pena at 305-646-7220.

### Help Bring Wireless Technology into the Classroom



Join The Foundation for New Education Initiatives in its effort to bring wireless technology into classrooms. Everyone in Miami-Dade has an opportunity to provide wireless connectivity to all students. The "Bring Wireless to the Classroom" fundraising campaign will require \$70 million in donations in order to connect the 340 schools in the county. Through the federal E-Rate program, which matches 10:1 for every dollar raised, this is an achievable goal. The goal is to raise \$7 million by January 31, 2012. Through the generosity of donors, \$2 million have already been collected.

Now is your chance to help achieve this goal. Visit the [donation page](#) and encourage your friends, colleagues, and family to give. Together we can help The Foundation make this dream a reality for students, transform classrooms and bridge the digital divide in our community. Visit [www.helpdadeschools.net](http://www.helpdadeschools.net) for more information.

---

## Children's Movement of Florida

### Legislative Agenda for 2012 Set

As an organization that strives to make children the first priority for all Floridians, The Children's Movement is encouraging the Florida Legislature to make strategic investments in five key areas.

- Parent skill-building
- Screening for special needs
- Voluntary Prekindergarten
- Healthcare
- Mentoring



Since 2011, the cost associated with their agenda has been significantly reduced. Investing in these areas will brighten the futures of countless children. The Children's Movement, along with parents and childcare providers, can help make sure this happens.

For more information on the work of The Children's Movement, including the 2012 Legislative Agenda, please visit their [website](#). New volunteer opportunities are also available -- providing more of Florida's children with access to health insurance and ensuring that more children are reading at grade level by third grade. For information on volunteering, please visit <http://childrensmovementflorida.org/volunteer>.

---

## Team Member Spotlight



When Trina Rodriguez joined the team at the Early Learning Coalition in April 2007, her 10 years in banking were not a setback. She jokes that working with her "adult" clients was much like working with children. She went back to school in her late 20s, obtaining a bachelor's degree in Early Childhood Education from the University of North Dakota. For Trina, education has meant the difference between a job and a fulfilling career. She worked at the University Children Center located on the UND campus, serving as both a teacher and mentor/supervisor to student teachers.

As a Classroom Mentor for the Lower Keys, Trina provides information and guidance in developmentally appropriate practices and curriculum implementation, models lesson plans, designs workshops and provides resources and ideas regarding legislative issues to guide directors and staff to clarify goals and track center progress. The most rewarding part of her job is "seeing teachers become the best they can be and seeing them get excited about teaching the kids in their classrooms."

Trina believes it's all worthwhile as long as she can make an impact in one person's life. One time, a surprise "Thank You" party was planned for her at a center, proving she is working toward (and achieving) her goal. In her free time, Trina loves reading books and going out on the boat with her husband Rico. Shopping is another passion of hers, one in which she claims she excels.

---

## Monroe County News Briefs

### 2010-11 VPK Preliminary Readiness Rates are Now Available

VPK providers should have received their preliminary readiness rate letters by the end of December. The letter includes instructions to obtain the required new password to access the DOE Readiness Rate website at <https://vpk.fldoe.org>. The User ID remains the same. Providers have until January 20, 2012, to complete the Verification of Children Served and submit a Dispute.

\*Note: The new draft of the Readiness Rate Rule (whereby 70% of all students in a school's VPK Readiness Rate calculation must score "ready" in both measures of the ECHOS and FAIR) and the new cut score (proposed scale of 0 - 100) is expected to be approved at the February 18th State Board of Education meeting.

### SAVE THE DATE:

Wesley House Provider Mini-Conference, "Take It to Heart"  
Saturday, January 14, 8:30 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.  
Murray E. Nelson Government and Conference Center, Key Largo

Presenters for the mini-conference include Keith Pentz, Education Consultant for Kaplan, and Amanda Moore, Statewide Inclusion Network Coordinator. The focus of the three workshops is relationship building and the heart and mind connection for all children, infants through preschool, including those with special needs. See the [flyer](#) and [registration form](#) for details.

Registration Fee: \$10.00  
RSVP deadline: January 10  
For additional information, contact Laurie Dunn at 809-5000 ext. 231.

Monroe County Advisory Committee Meeting  
Thursday, January 19, 1:00 p.m.  
Monroe County School District Board Room, 241 Trumbo Rd., 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. The agenda and conference call and videoconferencing information will be distributed shortly.

---

## 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!*

The Florida Department of Children and Families Child Care Licensing have a few upcoming training events scheduled for the new year, the first of which is scheduled for Wednesday, January 11, 2011. This meeting, co-hosted by the Miami Children's Initiative, will be the first-of-its-kind, located in the Caleb Center Auditorium for child care providers in specific zip codes in the Liberty City Neighborhood.

In addition, our annual provider meetings are bilingual, with English sessions in the morning (9am-12pm) and Spanish sessions in the afternoon (1pm-4pm). Guest speakers/abling representatives from the following programs will be in attendance:

- Communities Putting Prevention to Work (CPPW)
- DCF ACCESS
- DCF Refugee Services

Topics to be discussed at these meetings include updates in the rules and standards, everything providers need to know about food hygiene and many more relevant topics. The North Area provider meeting will be held at Miami Lakes Educational Center, 5780 NW 158 St., Miami Lakes, FL 33014. The South Area provider meeting will be held at Robert Morgan Educational Center, 18180 Southwest 122 Ave., Miami, FL 33177.

The Department of Children and Families complies with state and federal nondiscrimination laws and policies that prohibit discrimination based on age, color, disability, national origin, race, religion or sex. It is unlawful to retaliate against individuals or groups on the basis of their participation in a complaint of discrimination or on the basis of their opposition to discriminatory practices. If you require accommodations to participate in this event, please call Ian Fleary at 305-637-2978 within 7 days of the event.

## Quality Counts Unveiling New Standards

Quality Counts is hosting various meetings to unveil the new standards for Quality Counts 2.0. Meetings will take place in different locations and will be divided in two sessions (English and Spanish) for providers' convenience. Seats are limited.

### **January 17, 2012**

RCMA - Redland Campus  
16085 S.W. 293 Rd.  
Homestead, FL 33030

### **January 19, 2012**

United Way - Center for Excellence  
3250 S.W. 3 Ave.  
Miami, FL 33129

### **January 20, 2012**

Kidworks USA  
8155 W. 28 Ave.  
Hialeah, FL 33016

These training sessions are only for centers. Family Child Care Homes will be informed when their trainings will take place.

To reserve your space, please contact Ody Veliz at 305-646-7220 ext. 232 or by email at [oveliz@elcmdm.org](mailto:oveliz@elcmdm.org).

Early education. Lifelong success.



The banner features a blue background with a white envelope icon on the right. On the left, there are three stylized books in green, blue, and red. The text 'Early Learning Coalition' is prominently displayed in white, with 'of Miami-Dade/Monroe' in a smaller font below it. The website address 'www.elcmdm.org' is centered in white. To the right of the envelope icon, the text 'Join our mailing list' is written in white.

**Early Learning Coalition**  
of Miami-Dade/Monroe

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

Join our mailing list