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## Upcoming Board and Committee Meetings

Provider Open Forum  
Conference Call  
Thursday, March 22  
10:00 a.m.

Program & Strategy  
Tuesday, March 27  
3:30 p.m.

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# ELC News Alert

Issue 3  
March 2012

[President's Message](#)



Dear Friends:

The 2012 legislative session is officially closed. Especially in the final weeks, members of our legislature worked late into the night to balance many competing priorities. Compromises were made on a number of early learning issues, with some being favorable and others presenting significant challenges.

I would like to sincerely thank all of our partners for their tremendous support during this year's session. Developing Florida's early learning system into one that is truly high-quality remains a huge challenge, but not an insurmountable one. Working alongside our partners from the Florida Children's Council, The Children's Trust, The Children's Movement of Florida, the United Way of Florida, the Miami-Dade County Board of County Commissioners, Florida Taxwatch, the Florida Office of Early Learning, child care providers and many others, we made sure legislators heard the voices of Florida's children. All in all, we ended up in a much better place than where we were when the first early learning bill was filed at the beginning of session.

A detailed report of the changes enacted during this legislative session will be available on the Legislative Updates section of our website within a short time.

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.*

Finance  
Thursday, March 29  
8:00 a.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

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Coral Gables,  
FL 33134  
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305.447.1608 (fax)

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

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## Important Announcements

### Celebrating Dr. Seuss' Birthday and Read Across America



On March 2, the Early Learning Coalition and community volunteers collaborated on several celebrations across Miami-Dade and Monroe for Dr. Seuss' 108th Birthday. Board Members and local celebrities joined ELC staff for readings of some of Dr. Seuss' greatest stories, including "The Cat in the Hat," "Green Eggs and Ham" and "Hop on Pop." There were birthday cakes, green eggs and striped hats to get everyone in the spirit.

We would like to thank all the centers that opened their doors to us for these special events. We would also like to thank Board Members Octavio Verdeja, Yesenia Perkins, Modesto Abety-Gutierrez, Dave Lawrence Jr. and David Williams Jr., and special guests Roxana Garcia, Jen Herrera, Sara Cross, Chazz Woodson and Desmond Howard, for helping us promote the importance of early literacy.

To view photos from all of the events, please visit our [Facebook page](#).

### Celebrating Black History Month



In celebration of Black History Month, the ELC coordinated a book reading at Celebrity Kids Club of Miami Dade. Local 10's Calvin Hughes and the ELC's Roseline Philippe joined the teachers and children of Celebrity Kids to celebrate the accomplishments of Martin Luther King Jr., Rosa Parks, Hattie McDaniel and other prominent historical figures. Calvin read "Our Children Can Soar" by Michelle Cook and "Flip and Flop" by Dawn Apperley to the students. Roseline read them "If You Give a Mouse a Cookie" by Laura Numeroff before joining them in singing their favorite songs.

We extend a very special Thank You to the staff and children of Celebrity Kids Club. We appreciate you opening your center to us and our special guest, Calvin Hughes.

To view photos and videos from the event, please visit the ELC's Facebook page at [www.facebook.com/elcmdm](http://www.facebook.com/elcmdm).

"Keep 'community' in community-based care to protect children from abuse, neglect" by Jeb Bush

In an article that appeared in the Miami Herald on February 20, former Florida Governor Jeb Bush stressed the importance of having a foster care system that is individualized to the communities involved.

"There is no 'one size fits all' solution for families in crisis. Communities, like children, are diverse and have different needs. Lawmakers must continue to support this successful partnership that brings lawmakers, volunteers, advocates and business leaders to the table to solve the most important problems facing children and families. The model is dynamic, agile and allows for continuous improvement and strengthening."

To read the entire article, please visit the [Miami Herald's website](#).

## VPK Provider Readiness Rates Released

The Florida Department of Education has mailed the readiness rate letters to VPK providers. The State Board of Education voted to set the minimum VPK Provider Readiness Rate at 70 percent. This means 70 percent of the students included in a VPK provider's readiness rate must screen "ready" on both ECHOS and FAIR. A total of 2,125 providers around the state received a letter notifying them that they did not meet the readiness rate for the 2010-11 program year. Another 150 providers received a separate letter to request and then be granted a good cause exemption in order to be eligible to continue offering the VPK program. A complete list of provider performance data is available on the [VPK Readiness Rate website](#).

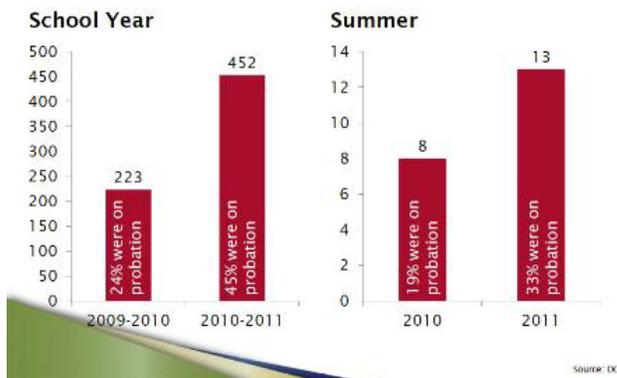
### VPK Readiness Rate Timeline



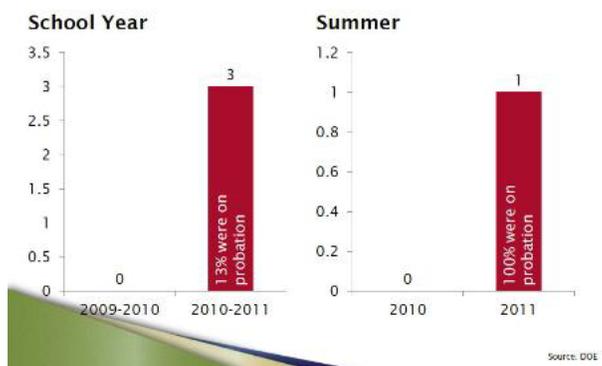
March 1st	Department of Education mails letters to Probationary VPK Providers
March 1st	Department of Education mails letters to Probationary VPK Providers that will be subject to Good Cause Exemption
March 1st	Department of Education provides each coalition and school district with a list of Probationary VPK Providers indicating which will need to apply for a good cause exemption
March 5th	Department provides VPK Provider level data showing the percentage of children ready on ECHOS and FAIR individually to coalitions and school districts.
March 21st	Deadline for Probationary VPK Providers to acknowledge Probationary status on VPK Readiness Rate website
April 4th	Deadline for Good Cause Exemptions to be submitted to the Department of Education

Please follow [this link](#) for ECHOS and FAIR Breakouts. There are two tabs, one for non-public providers and one for public providers. The tab containing non-public provider information is sorted by Coalition; the tab for public providers is sorted by county. The purpose of this information is to help providers better understand how the children who attended their programs performed on ECHOS and FAIR individually. These results are not based on students included in the readiness rate but rather for all students served, and cannot be used to determine a readiness rate.

### VPK Providers on Probation in Miami-Dade



### VPK Providers on Probation in Monroe



**Important Clarification:** Which VPK providers can and would need to apply for a good cause exemption? Providers that have three (3) or more consecutive VPK Readiness Rates that are below the minimum readiness rate set by the State Board of Education must apply for and receive a good cause exemption from the State Board of Education in order to continue to be eligible to offer the VPK program. All exemptions must be received by **April 4, 2012**. Providers that have questions about filing a good cause exemption should contact the Florida Department of Education at (850) 245-0445.

We hope this information is helpful. Thank you for all you do for Florida's children.

### Read to Learn Book Club Offers Free Books to 3-Year-Olds

All 3-year-olds in Miami-Dade County are eligible to receive a free book each month through The Children's Trust Read to Learn Book Club. By registering for the program, children can receive books in the mail each month for a year of fun and learning.



"No child should want for a book in Miami-Dade County, and this book club is just one tool in the comprehensive Read to Learn strategic plan," Modesto E. Abety-Gutierrez, president and CEO of The Children's Trust, said in a statement.

The Read to Learn Book Club is funded and administered by The Children's Trust, the Miami-Dade Family Learning Partnership and the Early Learning Coalition of Miami-Dade/Monroe.

To sign a child up for the program, complete the [registration form online](#).

To read more about the program, please visit the [Miami Herald's 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.

### 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:

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

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

**Thursday, May 10th**  
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.

### Change to Florida's Minimum Wage

As of Jan. 1, 2012, the minimum wage in Florida is \$7.67 per hour. Employers must pay their employees the hourly state minimum wage for all hours worked in Florida. If employees receive tips and meet eligibility requirements for the tip credit under the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA), those tips may count as received wages under the Florida minimum wage. In that case, employees should be paid \$4.65 as of Jan. 1.

To learn more about the changes to the minimum wage, please visit the Department of Economic Opportunity's website to view the [entire press release](#).

### Background Screening Change

Effective April 1, 2012, all fingerprints submitted for background screening must be completed using LiveScan. The Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE) will no longer accept or process fingerprint cards. This is due to a change in Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) policy. For additional information, please contact the Department of Children and Families (DCF) [Background Screening Office](#) at 305-377-5063 or 305-377-7681. You can also [view a PDF](#) about the LiveScan process on their website.

### Goodwill Ambassador Program Visits Taking Place

The Early Learning Coalition Goodwill Ambassador Program was established in an effort to build a better relationship with providers. On the first Friday of each month, ELC employees will go out on friendly visits to randomly selected centers that provide Voluntary Prekindergarten and School Readiness services. During these visits, ELC staff will drop off materials for the centers and provide helpful information about our programs and services.

These visits are in no way an inspection. All we want is to see how we can help you. We thank you for your cooperation and look forward to visiting each of your centers or homes.

For more information about this program, please contact Christina Vila at [cvila@elcmdm.org](mailto:cvila@elcmdm.org).

2011 Florida Early Education Standards for 4 Year Olds (formerly known as VPK Standards) Approved by the Florida State Board of Education

The Florida Dept of Education Office of Early Learning is negotiating with a printer to print the 2011 Florida Early Education Standards for 4 Year Olds, which will be available to providers to order online for \$10.00 per book. We will notify you when the printed versions are available. You can go to [www.fl DOE.org/earlylearning](http://www.fl DOE.org/earlylearning) to view the standards and download them to your computer.

Standards Training sessions are being planned and will be on the Web very soon. Be advised, if you have already taken 2005 and/or 2008 VPK Standards Training you are not obliged to take the 2011 training. As mentioned above, you can purchase the books on-line or download the standards to your computer.

Standards Training is only mandatory for directors of private schools who are in the process or received their Department of Children & Families (DCF) Directors Credential after 2006. If you fall into this category and want the VPK Program at your center, you must take three courses:

1. Emergent Literacy for VPK Instructors: A 5-hour course found online at DCF. Cost: \$10.00
2. VPK Director's Credential: 5-hour course found online at DCF. Cost: \$10.00
3. 2011 Florida Early Education Standards for 4 Year Olds: Face-to-face training to be scheduled in different locations around Miami-Dade and Monroe Counties. Cost: Free

Thank you for your patience.

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## Children's Movement of Florida



Getting the Message of Early Literacy, by Dave Lawrence

I promise you that one of the great joys of being a grandfather is watching children learn to read. Upon just that -- helping every child become a real reader -- rests the very future of community and country.

In advance of a major Movement early literacy initiative to be announced in the months to come, Carol Jenkins Barnett, the vice chair of The Movement; Mo Abety-Gutierrez from The Children's Trust, and I and many others traveled to Bonita Springs to participate in the 12th annual Celebration of Reading. That's the gathering hosted by former Governor Jeb Bush; he and his sister Dorothy Bush Koch now lead the Barbara Bush Foundation for Family Literacy. The day included an insightful policy discussion on family literacy featuring Sharon Darling from the National Center for Family Literacy; Jeanne Allen, president of the Center for Education Reform, and Florida Commissioner of Education Gerard Robinson. I especially remember Gov. Bush saying, "A high-quality pre-K program really matters." Amen.

Everywhere I turn these days, people are getting the message of early learning and growing readers. It is encouraging.

Dave Lawrence  
Chair  
The Children's Movement of Florida

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## Team Member Spotlight



Georgia Thompson, Family Child Care Home (FCCH) Technical Assistance Coordinator, joined the ELC team in September 2011. As a Coordinator, she is responsible for supervising, assisting and supporting the Quality Counts FCCH Technical Assistance Specialist team. The field staff she oversees provides training, coaching and modeling to providers in an effort to increase the quality of their programs through Quality Counts and NAFCC accreditation. The most rewarding part of her job is knowing she has a hand in providing a quality early childhood education to young children and being

able to inspire providers to deliver it.

Raised in Miami, Georgia received her Bachelor's degree in Child Development from Florida State University and is currently enrolled in the Masters of Human Sciences program at Nova Southeastern University. Before beginning at the ELC, she worked as an elementary school teacher in Miami-Dade. She also worked for some time as a child protective investigator for the Department of Children and Families in Crawfordville, Fla.

Education "sets the foundation for future learning experiences and is critical to the success of our children," she said. "I am excited to be a part of an initiative that puts children first!"

On her time away from the office, Georgia enjoys spending time with her family, volunteering with her sorority and other organizations, traveling, going to the beach and trying new restaurants.

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## Monroe County News Briefs

["Read Across America Day" Dr. Seuss Birthday Celebration at Lighthouse Christian Academy](#)



Guest reader Yesenia Perkins, a member of the ELC Board of Directors, read Dr. Seuss' "ABC" on Friday, March 2, at Lighthouse Christian Academy on Stock Island in honor of the famous author's 108th birthday and the National Education Association's "Read Across America Day." The annual event coincides with the Early Learning Coalition of Miami-Dade/Monroe's series of book distributions for preschool children in the two counties. You can view the picture at [keysnews.com](http://keysnews.com).

### Pre-Registration for 2012-13 VPK School Year Program Underway in March

Pre-registration dates are scheduled as follows:

#### Key West

- Wednesday, March 28, 10:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m., Wesley House Family Services, 1304 Truman Ave.
- Saturday, March 31, 9:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m., Wesley House Family Services, 1304 Truman Ave.

#### Tavernier

- Saturday, April 14, 9:00 - 1:00 p.m., Wesley House Family Services, 175 Wrenn St. (beside Coral Shores High School), MM 89

#### Marathon

- Saturday, April 14 @ 3:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m., Holiday Inn Express, 13201 Overseas Hwy., MM 54 Oceanside

*\*Note:* Ongoing registration will begin on Monday, April 16, at all Wesley House locations from 9:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. (Monday - Friday in Key West and Tavernier; Tuesday and Thursday in Marathon). Evening hours by appointment.

For additional information, please contact Mary Williams at 296-5557 or Val Taylor at 809-5000.

### School Readiness and VPK Child Health Screening Project Underway March - May

Our community partner, Florida Keys Area Health Education Center (Florida Keys AHEC), will be providing the second round of free child health screenings for School Readiness and VPK children. This will ensure that any children not previously screened have an opportunity to do so as well as follow-up with any concerns on children previously screened. As a reminder, 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 made available by a grant to FKAHEC from the Human Services Advisory Board of the Monroe County Board of County Commissioners and additional support from the ELC. Funding to serve the VPK

child population is made available by a grant to the ELC from the Health Foundation of South Florida.

#### Upcoming Trainings Offered by Wesley House

- CPR/First Aid- Kreative Kids, Marathon: March 10, 9:00-2:00 p.m.
- Competency Test- WHFS Key West: March 10, 9:00-2:00 p.m.
- Birth to Three Standards- Kreative Kids, Marathon: March 27, 6:00-8:00 p.m.
- Birth to Three Standards- St. James, Islamorada: April 4, 6:00-8:00 p.m.
- CAFÉ "Is this Normal"- Kreative Kids, Marathon: April 24, 4:30-5:30 p.m.
- CPR/First Aid- WHFS Key West: April 28, 9:00-2:00 p.m.

For additional information and/or to register, please contact Laurie Dunn at 809-5000.

#### Child Passenger Safety Training Available

The Florida Keys Healthy Start Coalition is interested in working with Monroe providers to offer a child passenger (car seat) safety training for your parents. The training consists of a 25-minute video and a Question and Answer session. If desired, a hands-on demonstration in the parking lot can be provided.

For additional information, please contact Leah Stockton at 293-8424.

#### Community Baby Shower

Key West Marriott Beachside Hotel, Friday March 30, 11:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Lower Keys Medical Center (along with community partners) is sponsoring a community baby shower to include educational booths, activities, gifts and community resources for all expecting mothers. For additional information, please view the following link:

<http://www.cuddlebugsbaby.com/events/cuddlebugs-baby-shower-1>

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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!*

The Florida Department of Children & Families is now offering online child care training courses. These courses are self-paced computer-based training modules that may be accessed at any time.

Once you begin the course of your choice, you have 45 days to complete it. If you do not complete the course in that time, you must pay for the course again

to continue. Your course completion information will be automatically posted on your Child Care Training Transcript.

The cost is \$10.00 per course. There are no refunds or transfers for online courses.

For a complete listing of courses offered, please refer to the Child Care Training PDF [on our website](#).

Early education. Lifelong success.

