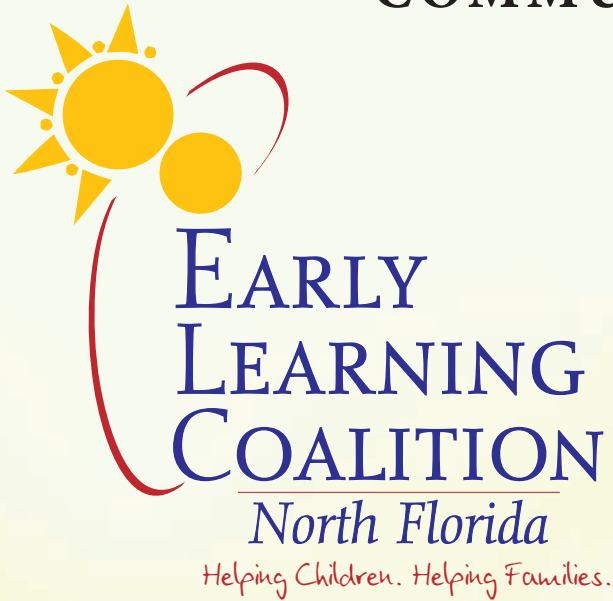


COMMUNITY REPORT



A person's
a person,
no matter
how small.

– Dr. Seuss



INTRODUCTION BY THE BOARD CHAIR



MISSION

To serve parents, caregivers and educators of children ages birth to pre-kindergarten by managing and evaluating early child care and early childhood education programs through a quality School Readiness delivery system.

VISION

Coordinate services that allow all children to enter kindergarten healthy and ready to learn.

Our year was once again filled with great challenges, hard work and exciting results.


Our Coalition continues its push for early learning child care quality as we strive to offer numerous provider trainings through our quarterly regional training schedule as well as being able to serve nearly 4,000 children each and every month. Our biggest success came this year when we merged with the ELC of Clay, Nassau, Baker and Bradford to become the ELC of North Florida. Although current School Readiness funding levels do not meet the entire needs of eligible children and families in Florida, we will be working locally to make our budget have a large impact with slot dollars and Gold Seal allocation at 78 percent of the budget.

Our forward-thinking ELC Board and proactive staff and generous community partners continue to team up to achieve astounding outcomes to the goals we set and with all of these outcome accomplishments, it is understandable that I say happily that this past year has continued to be non-stop busy serving as Board Chair for this ELC. Non-stop busy has included over 100 literacy volunteers in our area, coordinated by Joan Whitson, our Early Literacy Coordinator, to assure we are providing literacy outreach to the community, our children and our providers. Joan's work includes having Reading Pals available to our children who may need a 'reading pal' as well as themed story times, book distribution and building community partnerships.

As Board Chair, I have the privilege of leading an inspired local board and working with an incredibly committed staff. With Joan's outreach and engagement of community partners, the other staff members, in addition to their administrative work, are engaged in outreach as well. Our Grants and Operations Manager, Tajaro Dixon, stays consistently busy with monitoring and mandatory state reviews. She continues to work closely with the Putnam Academy of Arts and Sciences to help their board learn some of our board management practices. Our Executive Director, Dawn Bell, works to assure the ELC is represented in all community venues to include working with the local commissioners to build awareness of the impact our work has on the local economy in terms of assuring the workforce needed has access to quality early learning for their children. As local Board Chair, I also serve on the state Early Learning Advisory Council. This state-level council consists of 30 state board chair persons as well as governor appointed council leaders and Florida's Office of Early Learning (OEL) directors and staff.

Our commitment to building partnerships allows us to maximize expertise and resources within our community, eliminate duplication of services and work toward the common goal of educational success for our children. I continue to be both thrilled and honored to be serving as Chair of this organization.

Sincerely,


Nancy R. Pearson
Board Chair



The Coalition contracts with the following agency for provider services:

Episcopal Children's Services, Inc.

Episcopal Children's Services (ECS) serves as the Coalition's Primary Services Provider and offers program support services for School Readiness and Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten providers in the entire service delivery area. This agency also provides Child Care Resource and Referral services, Inclusion services and Quality Initiatives.

School Readiness

In 1999, the Florida Legislature established a statewide School Readiness program to target the at-risk birth to kindergarten population, to streamline the service delivery system for all publicly funded early education and child care. School Readiness programs include School Based Pre-K, Even Start, Head Start, Migrant Pre-K, and subsidized child care programs.

Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten

Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten (VPK) programs were implemented in August 2005. The Florida Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten Education Standards were formally adopted by the State Board of Education in March 2005 and updated in 2011 by the Department of Education (DOE). This early learning guide describes what 4-year-old children should know and be able to do by the end of their pre-kindergarten year and is designed to guide instructors in developing and implementing appropriate early learning

environments. It is of utmost importance that all VPK providers receive training on these standards. Therefore, on-going training on the Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten standards continues to be a Coalition priority.

Best Practices/Quality Initiatives

Meetings – Committee and Board meeting schedules are kept current on the Coalition website for easy access by the community. Board membership includes representatives from Faith Based and Private Child Care Centers. These representatives attend both board and committee meetings to assure childcare businesses provide feedback, input and address their concerns to the entire Board, Coalition and Primary Service Provider(s).

Annual Kids Rally – During Kids Week, providers are encouraged to participate in the annual hanging of the hands by sending in children's hand artwork to Tallahassee serving as a symbolic reminder to the legislators of the children in Florida. ECS has encouraged providers to participate in our annual local Children's Week events and by participating with the "Hanging of the Hands" ceremony that is an integral part of making the state legislators aware of the needs of our youngest citizens. ECS conducted several community-wide events on behalf of the Coalition relating to School Readiness and child care awareness. During these events, local 4 and 5 year old child care students were invited to enjoy story time with every child's favorite red head, Ronald McDonald. Children were also given the opportunity to decorate pre-cut paper hands to be hung in the Capitol

PROGRAMS

Rotunda during the entire week of Children's Week as a reminder to Legislators and advocates that we must take care of our children.

Reading Pals – A volunteer reading pal program was instituted in the fall of 2010, which matches up reading volunteers with children in child care centers. A reading pal visits once a week for an hour to read one on one or in small groups to children who may desire additional reading attention.

Three Year Old Book Bag Project – The ELC kicked off a new book distribution program in Fall 2011 which was highlighted by 1200 local three year olds receiving a book bag filled with one dozen age appropriate books along with educational materials for their parents on the importance of reading to their child. The bags were distributed at local child care centers.

Special Literacy Outreach – ELC staff and volunteers conduct literacy related theme programs in our contracted child care centers for both the families and often, just children. Each program includes storytelling, music, puppets, crafts and other activities. Each child receives a free book and each classroom receives a bag of books and activity ideas. Family night programs are conducted and offered to child care centers as a way to promote early literacy with their families. The ELC participates in the annual national Read for the Record event sponsored by Jumpstart and the simultaneous reading event that is part of Florida's "Celebrate Literacy" Week.

Read To Me – This program focuses on parents and shows the how-to by modeling the importance of reading to their child. The ELC partnered with the St. Gerard's house for young and pregnant teenage moms and the St. Johns County School District pregnant teens group to host several of these workshops.

Toddler Fest – A community wide event with parents and children in attendance. Each child received a free book and bicycle helmet and was done in partnership with a local Kiwanis group. This program is also presented by ECS staff during parent workshops at childcare centers.

Helping Hands – A monthly newsletter is published and distributed to providers with articles and best practice information related to the environment, accreditation, transitions, inclusion, early literacy and infant/toddler development.

Elder Options Grant – Partnering with Elder Options funding is available for a limited number of grandparents caring for grandchildren to receive assistance with their child care costs even when they do not qualify for state School Readiness funds.

Blackboard – Alert Now has merged into BlackBoard an upgraded automated dialing/e-mailing technology which enables the ELC to communicate even more quickly, effectively and at a low cost



with child care providers participating in VPK and the School Readiness programs. This initiative is now being considered by other ELC's across the state.

ELC Advocates – This group is comprised of a committed team of ELC volunteers whose mission it is to promote early literacy and spread the word about the importance of early learning in our community. These volunteers speak publicly on behalf of the Coalition to promote the importance of Early Literacy as well as conducting reading events, coordinating book programs and being part of the Pal's team to read to local young children.

Program Changes

VPK

OEL has developed an online system for parents registering for VPK. In the future this will replace other methods and allow parents the convenience of enrolling wherever they have internet access.

DOE Standards for Four-Year-Olds 2011 was formally adopted in October, 2011 (3-hour: Instructor-led). The professional development "Standards for Four-Year-Olds" is based on the Florida Early Learning and Developmental Standards for Four-Year-Olds. This training opportunity provides an overview of the Florida Early Learning and Developmental Standards for Four-Year-Olds and examples of developmentally appropriate instructional techniques for four-year old children. The training addresses the history and development of the Standards through a PowerPoint presentation, video clips, and hands-on activities to illustrate the Standards for Four-Year-Olds. The DOE Standards training became available as an online course in July of 2014 so next year, providers will have another option to help them meet this requirement.

Single Point of Entry/ Unified Wait List

The Primary Service Provider's Family Service Specialists engage parents in their child's education, making sure that parents understand the vital role they play. Information is provided to parents on childcare licensing, and how to contact their local licensing office. They are given assistance in understanding what school readiness is and what it means regarding the education of their child.

Parents using the web based Simplified Point of Entry are contacted for follow-up informational interviews. Each parent is also mailed a parent packet which is a model for the state that includes brochures describing how to choose child care, how to contact the Department of Children and Families Licensing Division, how to get help for special needs children, Kid Care insurance information, earned income credit information, and information pertaining to services available in the parents immediate area. Much of this information is available in both Spanish and English. Contact information is also included in a cover letter in the parent packet. The contact information for CCR&R is readily accessible to providers and employers by being advertised in the online yellow pages and in the Chamber of Commerce membership directory. Brochures and posters are circulated throughout the year and are posted in healthcare offices, school-based, faith-based and private provider offices, real estate offices, libraries, and local businesses.

The Primary Service Provider currently maintains and updates all school readiness providers through CMS/EFS. The Primary School Readiness Services Provider maintains a resource and referral specialist responsible for childcare provider database maintenance upon notification by DCF. The Primary Services Provider compares its EFS data to the list of DCF's existing licensed school readiness providers on a monthly basis and compiles a report on a semi-annual basis. Parents are surveyed to assure they are satisfied with the CCR&R process. For those children receiving childcare assistance, a parent may choose any provider complying with licensing requirements, registered and/or licensed exempt, and school readiness standards or an informal provider.

Child Care Resource and Referral Service (CCR&R)

Our Child Care Resource and Referral (CCRR) program connects parents with the child care programs and community resources best suited to meet the family's needs. CCRR is a FREE service. Parents can either come in or call the local offices and speak with a CCRR specialist to discuss the family's child care options and needs.

In an effort to get the word out in our communities about this service, staff attends community events to distribute Resource and Referral literature and answer questions about our services. During the 2013-2014 fiscal year staff participated in 89 community events, visited 141 businesses, and distributed 824 marketing materials all to promote Child Care Resource and Referral. In addition, staff served on community committees such as the Community Alliance of Northeast Florida, CWEEP, Mercy Network, and the St. Johns Head Start Policy Council.

CCRR provides other important information and referrals to parents. CCRR specialists inform parents about quality indicators in the child care setting so that parents can make an informed choice. Every parent receives a parent packet that includes a quality indicator checklist to be used as they visit potential programs. CCRR staff provides referrals to Child Find and other community services. During the 2013-2014 fiscal year, our CCRR Specialists had over 37,000 CCRR calls and in order to be accessible to our clients, we have offices located in each county with designated walk-in hours, appointments and are accessible by phone and email.



ANALYSIS

Staff Development/ Provider Training

The ELC is active in both Staff Development and Provider Training. This past year, the ELC has done the following:

- ELC awards scholarships for up to 20 CDA participants per year to child care professionals.

- ELC also hosts and annual Early Educators Conference and rotates this each year to a different part of our six county service area.

- Three Family child care conference scholarships are given annually for providers to attend the local conference to assist providers in gaining access to trainings to increase quality of care.

- Some provider trainings offer free/reduced materials and/or curriculum as funds are available. Quality Enhancements are purchased for providers based on the needs identified by the program assessments. Mini-grants and/or the purchases of quality enhancements are offered to assist programs improve the quality of their program and are based on current funding available. Providers must be contracted to serve school readiness children.

Community Coordination

The Coalition's Primary Service Provider, Episcopal Children's Services continues to hold quarterly provider meetings that are accessible to all providers.

Community Events - The Coalition participates in at least one community event per quarter. The quarterly events include the Annual Kids Rally and Reading Events, Ancient City Kids Day Toddler Fests and Community Family Concerts.

Books for Bravery - At the Putnam County Health Department, donated books are given to the immunization nurse to give each child receiving immunizations.

Florida Transition Project - A TRACK Team (Transitional Advisory Council for Kids) to ensure that a comprehensive, community-based, community-driven system is in place to transition pregnant women, children and their families from one service provider to another. The major goals of the project are to address transition issues on a community-wide basis through the formalization of transition policies and procedures, to increase awareness of issues, policies, procedures, laws and regulations that impact infant and early child transitions, to provide technical

assistance and support to the community, and to develop an interagency agreement for sharing of information.

Annual Kid's Rally and Reading Events - These events are the model for community collaboration. The Coalition and Episcopal Children's Services work with other local groups to promote literacy in a fun-filled, learning environment and often presenting a story time show.

UWADA (United Way Agency Directors Association) - A group of community service and United Way funded agencies sharing information and resources, and developing community goals to improve systems. Currently, the St. Johns County UWADA is working on a collaborative economic impact study to demonstrate the level of impact the not-for-profit sector has on the community.

Putnam County Shared Services Meeting - A group of community service and United Way funded agencies sharing information and resources, and developing community goals to improve systems. [Additionally, ECS maintains community resource guides for each county in our service area](#) which are used by parents throughout the region. Many other local agencies request copies as well. These resource guides help families locate other needed services such as food pantries, health services and even finding out where to register to vote.

Quality Activities for Infant and Toddler

Education Specialists furnish training, technical assistance and other supports to school readiness providers in the area of Infant & Toddler Care. Tools used to assess and increase quality of Infant & Toddler care are the ITERS and the CLASS assessment. The Toddler CLASS is administered twice a year for providers participating in our Enrichment program; ITERS is administered as needed or requested. For providers not participating in the Enrichment program, these tools are administered at the request of the provider. All providers have access to our trainings provided in Infant and Toddler Care.

Monitoring

The ECS Training Manager is responsible for ensuring for monitoring of compliance with, and enforcement of, applicable state and local requirements. All Plan Outcomes are monitored through interviews, documentation of activities, and proper back-up documentation at least annually as are contract requirements. Internal procedures and policies describe the processes and results of quarterly monitoring by the ELC prove our methods to be effective.

Inclusion

In conjunction with the administration of the ASQ-SE assessment tool (administered with parental permission to children with suspected social and emotional developmental delays), parents receive comprehensive education information regarding the tools and results of the assessment. Parents are also linked to appropriate services based on the results of the assessment. All providers have access to an inclusion specialist which provides technical assistance to providers serving children with special needs. The warm line is available to providers and is advertised through monthly newsletters and our website.

Other

Placed ads in the Relocation Guides to notify the community and newcomers that we have quality Child Care Resource and Referral services and preparatory programs for children entering into the educational system. These publications also help to inform the community that there is an active group of citizens who are serving as liaisons to the community through their direct relationship or partnership with the Coalition and ECS to bring resources together to help increase both the professionalism and quality of child care in their community.

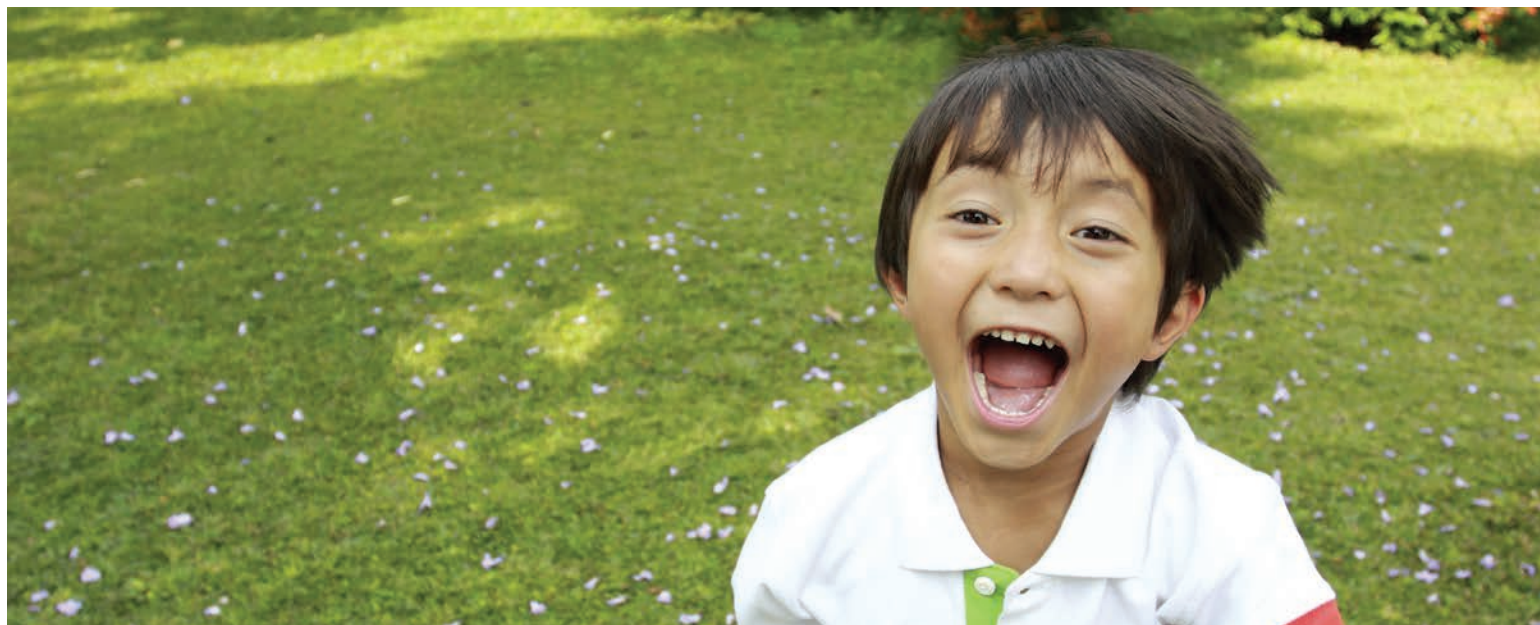
Program Issues

- The Coalition's monitoring staff and Primary Services staff collaborate with the local licensing agents to ensure that local providers offer quality services in a healthy and safe environment.
- Issues of providers not in compliance with the provider agreement are reviewed by the Board of Directors/Executive Director and/or given technical assistance or placed on probation.
- The Coalition is experiencing shortages of care in certain care levels (infants) and in certain locations. Even in areas where providers are plentiful, many require parents to pay the difference in the Coalition rate and their private pay rate, making care unaffordable to School Readiness families.
- The Coalition's plan includes coaching and one-on-one technical assistance with providers to increase positive outcomes for children. We have found this approach very successful where teacher stability is maintained. However, teacher turnover due to low pay continues to be a challenge.



FINANCIAL REPORT

The Coalition receives funding through the Office of Early Learning, which includes state and federal funds. Local governments and the United Way of St. Johns County also contribute match funding exclusively for slots in the working poor category and the Child Care Purchasing Pool.



A summary of budget and actual expenditures for fiscal year 2013-2014, is below:

Program Administration expenses capture the costs related to administering the School Readiness and Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten programs in the Coalition's service area. These include, but are not limited to, costs associated with contract administrative services, vendors, fiscal agent services, CPA audit fees, insurance, operating supplies, equipment and similar items.

Non-Direct Services captures the costs related to services necessary to implement the early learning programs such as eligibility determination and monitoring.

Quality Initiatives budget captures expenses related to providing curriculum support, provider staff development coordination, outreach and enhancement materials for the resource lab/lending library and direct enhancements for classrooms. Inclusion Services captures the costs related to services to include children with special needs into the traditional classroom with mainstream children.

Resource and Referral captures costs of services that are dedicated to helping all families find answers to their questions in regards

to identifying quality early learning programs and how to locate a provider that meets each family's needs when choosing early learning programs.

Infant and Toddler Services captures expenses related to quality initiatives directed to children who are infants through two years of age.

Child Care Slots captures the expenses associated with providing tuition assistance for every child enrolled in the School Readiness program. These expenses were paid to providers in the form of monthly reimbursements once proper documentation was submitted to verify attendance of School Readiness children in their care.

Administrative

- Approved revisions/updates to policies and procedures in place
- Updated the Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP)
- Adopted Sliding Fee Scales based on current federal poverty guidelines

Our Early Learning Coalition has made great strides in improving outcomes for children. We have made many quality improvements for children, providers, and programs over the past years through quality/program enhancements, professional development training, community outreach and public relations. There is strong and

SUMMARY

cohesive collaboration among contractors, board members, and community-based organizations in our community. Many civic organizations and local businesses collaborate well with the community and various school districts to provide needed services, educational award programs, and additional funding to support and enhance current programs.

We have made substantial gains in quality child care throughout our service area with the continued use of the School Readiness provider agreement. Even if a provider only serves one School Readiness child, the quality improvements benefit all the children in the setting, not just those receiving subsidies; therefore, raising the bar of quality care in our community for all children. The Coalition receives many thank you notes and calls throughout the year from providers directly

impacted by professional development training, scholarships, and quality initiatives, as well as its community partners. They are thankful for enhancement materials provided by the Coalition. Community partners are thankful for the information and collaboration received, as well as participation in local events and training.



Providers

Provider Type	Total Providers	Offered SR Only	Offered VPK Only	Both
1. Licensed Private Centers	283	129	33	121
2. Licensed Exempt Centers	44	35	7	2
3. Large Family Child Care Home	7	7	0	0
4. Licensed Family Child Care Home	47	46	1	0
5. Registered Family Child Care Home	7	7	0	0
6. Public School	63	13	35	15



Thank You!

2013-2014 Board of Directors

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