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Mission:
The Association of Early Learning Coalitions provides coordinated statewide leadership for an integrated, comprehensive system of early care and education across Florida, promoting services of the highest quality, advocating for all of Florida's children and their families, and supporting one another's professional growth.

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Important Announcements

Children: Our First Priority

The Association of Early Learning Coalitions (AELC) is pleased to announce the launch of ***Children: Our First Priority***. The goal of this effort is to make young children the very first priority in all 67 Florida counties served by Early Learning Coalitions. ***Although AELC members have always worked to make children our first priority***, AELC and its member coalitions will focus on highlighting opportunities and actions that make ***Children: Our First Priority*** on both local and state levels over the next year.

The three tenets of the campaign are:

- **Children First:** Local and state policies should support healthy child growth, development, and well-being.
- **Program Excellence:** The focus of public funding should be on programs that support outstanding academic and social outcomes for young children.
- **Equity to Support Economic Development:** Children from every background, in every neighborhood, should have an equal opportunity to succeed in school and in life by attending a high-quality early learning program.

These tenets are based on clear evidence that high-quality early learning services are essential for Florida. Early learning programs enable families to work and be more productive. Moreover, children participating in high-quality early education are more likely to enter school ready to learn, succeed academically, and be economically gainful and responsible citizens.

The AELC is one of Florida's strongest advocates for early learning with members in all 67 Florida counties. Early Learning Coalitions are dedicated to providing quality early learning services and work to maximize state dollars. As required in Florida Statutes, at least one-third

of the membership of Early Learning Coalition boards is from the private sector. Additionally, the AELC works closely with the 33-member, Governor-appointed Early Learning Advisory Council (ELAC) and other groups to give taxpayers the best early learning value for their tax dollar.

As evidence:

- Coalitions have **increased the number of children served** by almost 40,000 since their inception, without additional federal and state dollars.
- Coalitions **leverage over \$50 million to match and supplement federal and state funding** in partnerships with local entities and foundations.
- Although federal and state statutory requirements place a cap of 19% on administrative and program support costs (e.g., eligibility determination, child care resource and referral services, provider payments), Early Learning Coalitions have averaged 9.5% total for these costs, **directing more dollars to direct services**.

Children: Our First Priority will highlight efforts by Early Learning Coalitions to provide leadership in their local communities in support of beneficial policies and programs for young children, and efforts by the AELC to work with partners at the state level in support of advantageous State-level policies and programs for young children.

Early Learning Champion Awards

The AELC recognized Senators Michael S. Bennett and Anitere Flores with the 2010 Early Learning Champion Awards. During the 2010 Florida Legislative Session, Senator Bennett and then Representative Flores were instrumental in calling attention to important children's issues. The AELC is most appreciative of their dedicated public service and genuine concern for children and families in Florida.

AELC 2011 Legislative Priorities

The AELC recognizes the importance of school readiness supports in helping families work, a critical goal of Governor Scott, and is committed to being good stewards of public and private funds for early learning services. To that end, members have adopted three legislative priorities:

- **Support restoring General Revenue for School Readiness** to keep families working and children learning
- **Support local decision-making of early learning funding through Early Learning Coalitions**, allowing local citizens to make the best decisions for local needs and priorities
- **Support a high-quality Voluntary Prekindergarten Program** to ensure children enter school ready to learn



Important Federal Action on Child Care

A new Congress at the federal level must make important decisions by March 4th on child care and Head Start funding. Let your federal representatives know about the importance of child care funding. To find information on federal representatives, please visit <http://www.naeyc.org/policy/action>.

Traditional Drop-Side Cribs Have Been Outlawed

After more than 30 infant and toddler deaths last year, the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) officially outlawed the manufacture, sale, and re-sale of drop-side cribs. While these cribs were initially designed to aid parents in easily lifting their babies up and out via a drop-down side-rail, the results of malfunctioning and cheaply-made parts often led to tragedy as infants got caught in the partially detached rails.

More than nine million drop-side cribs have been recalled in the past five years. Parents and caregivers are advised to check that each part on the rail of their drop-down crib is properly and securely assembled. Also, please ensure your crib has not been recalled. For more information, please review the CPSC's press release on crib-safety at <http://www.cpsc.gov/CPSCPUB/PREREL/prhtml11/11074.html>.

News Briefs from Around the State



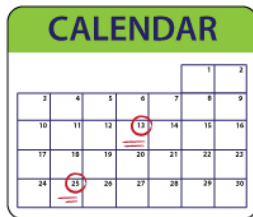
Children's Movement of Florida

The Children's Movement is urging Florida lawmakers to make children a funding priority and improve Florida's performance on key indicators of child wellbeing. In outlining The Movement's five-part legislative agenda, David Lawrence Jr., President of



The Children's Movement, notes that Florida currently spends just 3 percent of tax money it collects on children and that funding the 5 priorities can be achieved for as little as a 1 percent increase, an additional \$300 million. The five-part agenda focuses on "...skill building for parents, high-quality,

best-practice mentoring programs, fixing Florida's PreK program for four-year-olds, screening and treatment for children who might have special needs, and health insurance for children." The Children's Movement of Florida believes that the well-being and education of our children in Florida must be the **highest priority** of government, business, non-profit institutions and families. For more information, please visit http://childrensmovementflorida.org/about/legislative_agenda/.



Upcoming Events

Florida's Legislative Session

March 8 - May 6, 2011

Tallahassee, FL

To learn more, please visit www.leg.state.fl.us.

Early Learning Advisory Council (ELAC) Meeting

March 11, 2011

Doubletree Hotel, Tallahassee, FL

The Early Learning Advisory Council whose members consist of the Governor-appointed chair, the chair of each Early Learning Coalition, a member appointed by the President of the Senate, and a member appointed by the Speaker of the House, is charged with coordinating the efforts of local Early Learning Coalitions and realizing the vision for Florida's early learning system. For additional information, please visit <http://www.floridajobs.org/ELACOnline/index-1B.html>.

NACCRRRA 2011 National Policy Symposium

"Change the Conversation: Change Child Care"

March 15 - 19, 2011

Hyatt Regency on Capitol Hill, Washington, DC

NACCRRRA's annual Policy Symposium features innovative sessions on the latest policy, research and practice developments in child care and CCR&R. It also offers a forum for policy analysis and discussion, examination of latest research, high-quality training, peer networking, visits to legislators and resources dissemination. For information on the symposium's program, hotel reservations, and registration, please visit <http://www.naccrra.org/conferences/symposium/2011/2011-nps.php>.

Should you have additional questions, you may also email conferences@naccrra.org or call (703) 341-4162.

Children's Week

"One Voice for Children"

April 3 - 6, 2011

Tallahassee, FL

Children's Week, an annual grassroots event, has promoted children and family issues in Florida to policymakers for over 15 years. Supported by non-profit, corporate, philanthropic, faith-based, state agencies and organizations, Children's Week develops and implements community events and activities statewide to share valuable knowledge and information about children's issues. For additional details, please visit www.childrensweek.org.

NHSA 38th Annual Head Start Conference

April 4 - 8, 2011

Kansas City Convention Center, Kansas City, MO

Participants will learn how to apply theory and best practices into the effective delivery of high-quality early childhood care and education.

For questions about the Annual Head Start Conference & Meetings, please contact Angela Smith at asmith@nhsa.org or call (703) 739-7563. To learn more information about the conference and hotels in the area, and/or to download the exhibitor prospectus or conference registration form, please visit http://www.nhsa.org/?e=events_detail&event_id=78.

2011 NACCP National Conference

"Beyond the Horizon"

April 12 - 15, 2011

Talking Stick Resort, Scottsdale, AZ

The 27th annual National Association of Child Care Professionals Conference (NACCP) is composed of educational sessions and networking opportunities for professional child care directors, owners, and administrators at every stage in their child care management career. To download the conference brochure and/or to register online, please visit www.naccp.org.

2011 NAA National Convention

April 16 - 18, 2011

Gaylord Palms Resort & Convention Center, Orlando, FL

The 23rd annual National AfterSchool Association (NAA) conference provides comprehensive professional development workshops and opportunities for afterschool professionals throughout the nation. To learn more about the convention schedule, hotel and travel, speakers, exhibits, and registration, please visit <http://www.naaweb.org/?contentID=575>. You may also email info@naaconvention.org or call (703) 610-9028.

2011 National Smart Start Conference

May 2 - 5, 2011

Joseph S. Koury Convention Center, Greensboro, NC

The National Smart Start Conference is the nation's largest conference devoted to early education systems and strategies. It provides professional development for early education leaders committed to improving the quality of and access to early childhood services for all children.

For more details on the conference's keynote speakers, hotel and travel information, and to register, please visit

Research Brief

Quality Early Education Plays a Significant Role in Florida's Economic Growth



As caregivers, teachers, and advocates; we are passionate about our children's care and education. We know that excellent early learning programs play a vital role in their preparation for school and lifelong success. What may be less recognized, however, is the positive impact the industry has on our state's economy.

According to a quality initiative report by the Florida Agency for Workforce Innovation's (AWI) Office of Early Learning in July of 2009, the research is clear: high-quality early education is a sound investment and a significant contribution to Florida's economic growth.

Investing in quality early learning provides a higher rate of return and boosts the state's economy in a variety of ways. Namely it:

- allows parents and families to continue in the workforce while their children are being safely cared for in a nurturing setting
- **directly** supports the workforce through employment, payment of taxes and wages, and the exchange of goods and services with other Florida industries
- **indirectly** supports the workforce by making it possible for parents to participate in education programs, and acquire and retain jobs
- enhances Florida's economic growth through the employment of 70,784 people as of 2006, and generation of \$2.9 billion total in wages (\$1.1 million) and profits produced by industries that support child care settings (\$1.9 million)
- encourages children to become more successful in school and in life by:
 - increasing high school graduation
 - minimizing participation in crime
 - increasing the likelihood to become a homeowner and establish a savings account
 - producing more economic and tax activity
 - boosting college attendance rates among disadvantaged children
 - increasing employment and the ability to garner higher wages

- saving money via decreased dependency on welfare and reduce incarceration and children's special education intervention

The child care and early education industry supports parents and children, and enhances economic growth. Children who participate in quality early learning programs have increased graduation rates and access to higher learning, and are less reliant on government assistance. As a major Florida employer, the child care field also provides thousands of jobs for parents, allowing them to work while their children are being cared for in safe environments. Moreover, it stimulates economic activity through the purchase of goods and services from other industries in the state. Investing in high-quality early learning is a sound fiscal choice.

*Source: Agency for Workforce Innovation, Office of Early Learning: *Quality Initiative, July 2009 - Vol. 1, Issue 1.*

Coalition Spotlight

Early Learning Coalition of Miami-Dade/Monroe



The Early Learning Coalition of Miami-Dade/Monroe was awarded a \$168,380 grant from Reading Is Fundamental, Inc. (RIF), the nation's largest children's literacy organization, to purchase and distribute books to children in childcare centers and family childcare homes throughout Miami-Dade and Monroe counties. The Coalition has agreed to match the grant from RIF with funds totaling approximately \$50,000.

In three book distribution events, 63,000 books will be distributed to 21,000 children ages zero to five-years-old. The final remaining distribution is scheduled for the week of January 31, 2011.

The goal of the book distribution program is to encourage reading at a young age. By providing new, free books, children can build their own personal libraries and read together with their families.

Early Learning Coalition of Pasco and Hernando

The Early Learning Coalition of Pasco and Hernando Counties, Inc. was the recipient of the Be More Humble: People's Choice Award at the Fifth Annual WEDU (Tampa Public Television) Be More Awards™ last year. Area citizens chose the ELC via the WEDU People's Choice Poll as the nonprofit organization they feel most exemplifies the positive spirit of the community. Once again, for the third year in a row, the Coalition is a 2011 Be More Awards finalist.

The Coalition was also honored by the *Tampa Bay Business Journal* when it was named the 2010 Education Nonprofit of the Year during its annual awards ceremony. This award is based on fiscal responsibility, management, mission, programming, and impact on the community. "Selection as Education Nonprofit of the Year by the *Tampa Bay Business Journal* is the most prestigious honor received by board members, staff and over 350 respected child care providers in our counties. Our commitment is to the thousands of children and families we work hard to serve each day. This honor will allow us to do even more," said Coalition Executive Director Jim Farrelly.

Early Learning Coalition of Marion

The Early Learning Coalition of Marion County, through their Success by Six Initiative, sponsored the 3rd Annual Pajamas and Books for Bedtime. Partnering with local businesses, organizations, and community members, the ELC of Marion County collected and distributed 2,746 pajamas and 3,008 books to children in need. Children and teens residing in shelters and group homes in Marion County, as well as many children in families in need, were excited and grateful to receive the pajamas and books during the holidays.

Early Learning Coalition of Escambia

The Early Learning Coalition of Escambia County has partnered with the EscaRosa Coalition on the Homeless, Gulf Breeze Rotary Club and the Escambia VISTA Coalition to bring resources to homeless families with preschool-age children. The Homeless Preschool Children Project (P-Kids) identifies homeless families through local shelters, early learning program directors, faith-based projects and Project Reach (a school district initiative that supports school-age homeless children).

VISTA volunteers then coordinate and refer these children and their families in need to local resources. Children are also given inexpensive tote bags filled with pajamas, socks, underwear, a personal toy and book, and resource information made available by donation funds. As of December last year, approximately 219 children have received and/or been referred to resources since June 2010; thus 122 homeless families have been touched by the P-Kids project.

During the past holiday season, the ELC's staff hosted a Christmas party at a local homeless shelter for the families staying there. To help make the holidays for the children and their parents a bit brighter, P-Kids bags, toys, and other donations of food and gifts were presented by Mr. and Mrs. Claus.

Early Learning Coalition of Putnam and St. Johns

The Early Learning Coalition of Putnam and St. Johns Counties hosted a

fun-filled early literacy event at Anastasia Branch Library on November 3, 2010 to celebrate National Family Literacy Month. More than 150 parents and children listened to stories, sang songs, played alphabet games, worked on puzzles, "fished" for books and created arts and crafts projects.

"This is our first Toddler Fest," said Joan Whitson, ELC's early literacy coordinator. "Studies show the best opportunity to influence our children's lifetime learning is before kindergarten, so we take every opportunity to provide resources for our area families. We were also able to sign up more kids for Dolly Parton's Imagination Library program, which provides children born after May 1, 2008, one free book each month until they are five."



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