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Private For-Profit Child Care Provider
Angela Gilmore
Faith Based Child Care Provider
Debbie Kibler*
Individuals with Disabilities
Education Act

*Denotes Executive Committee

Early Learning Coalition
OF MANATEE COUNTY
(941) 757-2900
600 Eighth Avenue West, Suite 100
Palmetto, Florida 34221
www.ELC-Manatee.org

Private Sector Appointed Members
Robert Bell
Patrick Cassella
Amy Cooley
Linda Guritz*
Caroline Halfacre
Dennis Jagdmann
Dianne Kopczynski*
Tim Pye
Melanie Shackelford
Len Tabicman

Special Advisors
Annette Larkin
Jackie West

The information contained in this annual report is based on data collected from July 1, 2012 - June 30, 2013.
New Palmetto ELC Location Doubles Space, Saves Money To Serve More Families

It is my pleasure to present the Early Learning Coalition (ELC) of Manatee County’s Annual Report for fiscal year 2012-2013. This fiscal year, our focus was on supporting not only our families and providers in Manatee County but also on locating new office space to save on occupancy costs and expand our capability to deliver more services to providers. I am very happy to report that with the approval and guidance of our Board of Directors, we were able to procure space in Palmetto that allowed us to double our office space and significantly cut our lease costs.

In our new facility, the lobby is open, airy and inviting to families and provides a place for children to play and interact with each other. Our cutting edge fully equipped model preschool classroom is designed to show parents what they should expect when taking their children to a Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) or School Readiness provider. This classroom is also used to provide technical assistance to providers as part of our professional development program. In addition to the classroom, we have a training facility that has the infrastructure needed to accommodate our training sessions for professional development and community education classes. Our new facility provides the capacity to meet the growing needs of our agency and better serve our county.

All of these wonderful upgrades to our space were part of a $600,000 build-out that was absolutely FREE to the ELC. Because of that savings, we are able to dedicate more of our budget to child care slots and have been moving children off of the wait list and into care at a more rapid pace. As exciting as that is, there are still more children being added to the wait list daily and as of June 30, 2013 there were 963 children waiting for child care funding.

The ELC of Manatee County has been at the forefront for technological advancements in the state. We set up and implemented an online communication network between all of the 30 coalitions throughout the state for the Association of Early Learning Coalitions. This system allows coalitions to easily communicate among themselves via a secure internet site. ELC of Manatee County was the first in the state to virtualize use of the Enhanced Field System database. Several other coalitions have incorporated our method of electronically exchanging documents securely over the internet, allowing them to significantly reduce postage costs as we do here. Other ELCs have also adopted our process of document imaging storage to reduce the number of paper files that need to be maintained. The list of assistance that ELC of Manatee County has provided to its peers around the state with regard to technology is quite noteworthy.

Currently, the ELC of Manatee County operates with less than a four percent administrative cost. As we move forward in the next fiscal year, we will continue to look for ways to streamline our administrative costs, thus allowing us to bring as many children as possible into quality early care and educational programs, both of which help Manatee families become strong and successful in learning and in life.

Sincerely,
Paul A. Sharff, Chief Executive Officer
Early Learning Coalition Of Manatee County, Inc.

The Early Learning Coalition of Manatee County is a 501(c)3 non-profit agency that provides and coordinates the services of school readiness programs in order to help all children develop the skills needed to achieve educational success. We strive to improve the quality of services available in the community and aim to invest in the future of Manatee County through the early care and education of its children.

Our Programs and Services

- Child Care Resource and Referral
- Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK)
- School Readiness
- Early Literacy Initiatives
- Quality Initiatives
- Professional Development
- Developmental Screening and Intervention
- Family Engagement and Parenting
- Inclusive Child Care
- Community Outreach

Our Mission

To provide and coordinate the services of School Readiness programs in an efficient manner, in order to help all children develop the skills needed to achieve future educational success; to support the role of parents as their children's first and most important teachers; and to continue to improve the quality of services available in the community.

Our Vision

To provide and support high-quality school readiness opportunities for all children and their families, understanding that it is in the first years of life that a child’s future educational success is determined.

The ELC lobby is open, airy and inviting to families and provides a place for children to play and interact with each other.

Find out more about Voluntary Prekindergarten by picking up our brochure in either English or Spanish at the ELC office.
Names On Giving Tree Recognizes Those Who Donate To ELC

The Early Learning Coalition (ELC) of Manatee County’s goal is to provide quality early learning experiences for children. This effort is made possible by state and county funding and the generous gifts of our donors.

The Giving Tree, located in the ELC lobby, was created to recognize those who have contributed to support our family engagement, early literacy, child screening and quality programs.

For the following levels of donation, the names of contributors are added to the Giving Tree:

- $50 - $99  Small Leaf
- $100 - $249  Orange
- $250 - $499  Large Leaf
- $500 - $999  Large Branch
- $1000 - $4999  Ladder Steps
- $5000 or more  Orange Basket

“If you want to invest in early learning and get the most impact for your valuable dollar, supporting the Early Learning Coalition is a sure manner for you to achieve both of those goals.”

- Paul Sharff, CEO
Child Care Resource and Referral

Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) is the “front door” to the Early Learning Coalition’s multiple services. It is a free marketing tool for legally operating providers in Manatee County as the information that they provide is updated immediately in our database. Referral lists are available to private paying customers, as well as Early Learning Coalition (ELC) funded customers looking for child care services in Manatee County. Parents are educated on how to identify quality care, are informed about different types of care and are encouraged to continue looking for quality once their children are placed in a child care facility.

Our highly dedicated and trained staff members conduct one-to-one education in the office and provide early learning literature in the lobby. They also participate in many community events to increase the awareness of the ELC’s services. Examples of community events include The Children’s Summit, the Stand Down for the Homeless, the Children’s Parade and Party in the Park.

CCR&R helps families find child care. It also provides resources and information for child care providers and the community. The CCR&R telephone service is available Monday through Friday 7 a.m. - 6 p.m. and Fridays by appointment. Website access is always available. These services are provided at no charge.

Child Care Resource and Referral Offers Families

- A free, unbiased and customized list of child care options, based on the specific needs of the family
- Information about providers such as location, hours and schedule, curriculum, fees, vacancies, special needs, teacher credentials, licensing standards and more.
- Guidelines on how to identify quality child care

Child Care Resource and Referral Offers the Community

- Child care supply and demand information
- Child care market rates
- Statistical information
Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK)

Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) is free to all four year old children in Florida. Families do not have any income requirements or restrictions. VPK began as a constitutional amendment that was passed by Florida voters in 2002 and signed into law in January 2005. Children must be four years old on or before September 1 and must be a Florida resident. The Early Learning Coalition of Manatee (ELC) registers child care providers and provides applications and information to parents.

The VPK program is designed to provide four-year-olds access to quality prekindergarten educational experiences and prepare Florida’s children for kindergarten by developing the skills they need to become good readers and successful students. VPK includes standards for literacy skills, strict accountability, appropriate curricula, substantial instruction periods, manageable class sizes and qualified instructors. Parents have the option of enrolling children in a school-year program, consisting of 540 instructional hours, or a summer program, consisting of 300 instructional hours.

VPK programs are offered by public, private and faith-based providers that meet Florida eligibility requirements. Providers determine their program hours and daily schedule.

The ELC supplied mini-grants to the Manatee Education Foundation for their “Cash for Classrooms Grants” in five programs for a total of $2,900. These mini-grants were used to buy needed supplies for their classrooms to enhance their VPK/Pre-K ESE classrooms and support programs.

Total Percentage of VPK Payments by Program Type

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Faith Based</td>
<td>20.11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Child Care Home</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Center</td>
<td>54.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private School</td>
<td>.34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public School</td>
<td>25.45%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Those We Serve

In 2012-2013, the Early Learning Coalition of Manatee County served:
- 3,199 Children
- 3,160 Families
- 127 VPK Program Providers

Find out more about Voluntary Prekindergarten by picking up our brochure in English or Spanish at the ELC office.

www.ELC-Manatee.org | PAGE 7
School Readiness—Child Care Financial Assistance

The Early Learning Coalition (ELC) enrolled or funded 349 children from the wait list into programs during fiscal year 2012-2013. There were 963 children on the wait list in Manatee County, as of July 1, 2013. These children and families are on the wait list due the lack of available funding.

School Readiness financial assistance helps working parents with the cost of child care (frequently called a child care subsidy). These services include extended-day, extended-year and school age care for children to support parents in gaining and retaining employment and becoming financially self-sufficient. Generally, families with children who are 12 years old or younger may receive help through the School Readiness Program. Families include those that are transitioning from welfare to work, at-risk of child abuse or neglect, low-income employed families, teen parents, migrant farm workers and families of children with special needs.

The family will pay a monthly fee for each child for whom they receive financial assistance based on family income and family size. All families eligible for School Readiness financial assistance may select the provider of their choice. However, the ELC will only pay for child care if the child care provider has been approved by the ELC.
Supporting Early Language, Literacy and Math Concepts Development

As part of the Early Learning Coalition’s (ELC) Plan Initiative for Family Literacy Opportunities, the ELC received over 25,000 free books from grant opportunities through First Book and Usborne Books.

- A book is given to every child at every community event in which the ELC participates, with information about the importance of early literacy included as a parent guide.

- Over 3,200 developmentally and age appropriate children’s books were given to the families who visited the office.

- Children’s books are available in the lobby of the ELC office for parents to read to their children while they wait for their appointment. Other literature is present in the lobby encouraging the development of literacy at home.

- Over 5,000 books were donated to law enforcement agencies in Manatee County for distribution to children being removed from the home during protective service investigations.

- The ELC and the Kiwanis Club of Bradenton partnered in the Third Annual Every Child A Reader Day program, bringing together 116 volunteers and 112 classrooms for a morning of reading to children in the three to five year-old-age group. Each of the 1,727 children received a copy of the book to take home and continue the reading relationship with their parents.

- Over 100 books were distributed to children attending the story readings by area dignitaries at the Party in the Park. This is an annual child advocacy event at the end of the route of the Children’s Parade. The books were donated by the Children’s Week state level organization.

- Literacy for the Holidays is an ELC program that distributes a book in December to each child in each of the contracted programs, regardless of the funding source or school readiness/VPK status. The ELC distributed more than 10,000 books during the 2012 holidays.

- Every child enrolling in Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) received a backpack containing a book. The ELC distributed 2,201 backpacks and books from the opening of VPK enrollment through June 20, 2012.

The ELC posts an on-line parent newsletter, which includes information on literacy, math, science and more. The ELC newsletter, ELC Parent Pages, is a quarterly publication filled with activity suggestions that support skill development language, literacy and math concepts and general program information. The ELC staff provides technical assistance and on-site in-service training sessions to assist providers in working with families to develop these skills in the children they serve.

The ELC continued to offer training and technical assistance on literacy building skills, such as:

- Emergent Literacy for VPK Instructors and Integrating the Standards: Phonological Awareness. Emergent Literacy’s participants received materials to enhance their emergent literacy intentional instruction. One Emergent Literacy course was attended by 27 providers. Twelve Integrating the Standards: Phonological Awareness courses served 210 participants.

- The ELC offered three workshops, including “Make A Book” and “Igniting and Fueling the Fire/Conspiracy of Literacy,” These three workshops served 66 participants.
Quality Initiatives For Child Care Providers

The Early Learning Coalition of Manatee County (ELC) continued to work with early education and care providers in Manatee County to ensure they have the best possible environment for the children in their care. The ELC offered providers the opportunity to participate in the Quality Counts for Manatee Children program. This program is aligned with the national models of Quality Rating and Improvement Systems (QRIS) and offers participating providers opportunities to continuously improve the quality of their services.

The program uses the Environment Rating Scales (ERS) for assessing quality in each classroom. The ERS have proven reliability and validity and are used internationally. The scales reflect child development from a comprehensive perspective and examine a wide variety of areas that contribute to positive child development. The scales include multiple indicators organized into domains such as space and furnishings, personal care routines, language-reasoning, activities, interaction, program structure and parents and staff.

Providers receive a star-level designation from one star to five stars and are based on their quality score, similar to restaurant ratings. Participation and the award stipends of continued star-level designations reflect a program’s choice to raise the bar, regarding their commitment to quality beyond basic licensing standards, expectations and requirements. This provides a consistent way for parents to distinguish the levels of quality in early education programs in Manatee County, allowing them to make more informed choices. It is a powerful consumer education tool informing parents about quality options for their child’s earliest and most important learning experiences.

Ron Mohl from Lakeshore Learning Materials receives a warm greeting from participants at the Manatee Conference for Young Children 2013
Professional Development

The Early Learning Coalition of Manatee County (ELC) continued its commitment to professional development opportunities for early childhood practitioners by providing a myriad of learning experiences designed to improve the knowledge, skills and behaviors as well as the attitudes and values of the early childhood workforce that promote young children’s optimal learning and development.

*The ELC’s professional development supports the five key aspects of the teacher’s role and effective teaching:*

1. Creating a caring community of learners
2. Teaching to enhance development and learning
3. Planning curriculum to achieve important goals
4. Assessing children’s development and learning
5. Establishing reciprocal relationships with families

*Highlights of the professional development activities include:*

- Safer, Smarter Kids, a Florida legislature-adopted personal safety curriculum for kindergarten, was distributed to 77 participants of two workshops conducted by the author, Lauren Book.

- The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) training entitled, “Developmentally Appropriate Practice: Training Program for Teaching Staff.”

- Early science workshops based on NAEYC’s publication *Ramps and Pathways* and other credible resources

- Florida Early Learning and Development Standards for Birth through Five

- Director’s and Florida Child Care Professional Credential and renewal scholarships

- Scholarships for providers seeking associate and baccalaureate degrees in Early Childhood Education at State College of Florida

- Organization and management of the 6th Annual Early Childhood Conference for Providers

- Scholarships for seven family child care home providers to attend the Florida Family Child Care Home Association annual conference

- A literacy-building presentation at the state conference of the Florida Family Child Care Home Association by ELC staff

- Teaching Strategies Gold training for providers in the TS Gold pilot program, with 26 persons participating

- Presentations of workshops on intentional teaching, communicating with parents, and enhancing the classroom with homemade materials at the One Goal Conference in Tampa in July 2012 by the ELC

- Collaboration with the Safe Kids Coalition of Manatee in implementing the Safety Day conference that included workshops on child passenger safety, fire safety, poison prevention and water safety.
Developmental Screening and Early Intervention

The Early Learning Coalition of Manatee County (ELC) offers families with children under five years old an age-appropriate developmental screening to help ensure children are reaching their age-appropriate developmental milestones/skills. These screenings are initially done at the child care setting.

Children are screened for development in the following five areas typical for each age: communication skills, gross motor skills, fine motor skills, problem-solving skills and personal-social skills. Children, whose scores indicate concerns in any area, are discussed with the child care provider and the parent by ELC-trained developmental specialists. The point of the discussion is to gather additional information from the adults in the child’s life to determine if further evaluation is needed to help the child reach developmental goals. The Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ) is used for the screening, including the ASQ-SE, designed to screen for social and emotional delays. The Battelle Development Inventory is utilized to assess children’s progress from birth to five years old.

The ELC also provides vision and hearing screening for School Readiness-funded children as well as children served by other community organizations such as East Coast Migrant Head Start, Redlands Christian Migrant Association, the Pilot VPK for migrant families and the Selby Preschool at Community Haven for Adults and Children with Disabilities.

The ELC also continued to provide positive behavior training based on the Pyramid Model for Supporting Social Emotional Competence in Infants and Young Children, an evidence-based practice developed by two national, federally-funded research and training centers. The ELC collaborated with the Training and Technical Assistance Community group to provide Pyramid Model training, in conjunction with the School District of Manatee County and Manatee County Head Start, to help ensure preschool programs that feed into participating schools receive training on use of the Pyramid model.

Parenting Initiatives

Through the ELCs collaboration with the Family Partnership Center (In Home Parenting): a total of 223 home visits with 37 parents and 76 children ages birth to twelve years of age were served. Both English and Spanish home visits were conducted. Of these home visits, 89 were provided to 13 relative caregivers of 30 children ages birth to twelve years of age.

The ELC procured the BLOCK Fest™ exhibit as a donation from the Florida Family-School Consortium/Florida Parental Information and Resource Center at the University of South Florida. The BLOCK Fest™ is a research-based family interactive event that helps raise awareness of early math and science learning by offering hands-on block play experiences to families with young children.

Parents discover how they can help their children learn early math and science concepts while they play with blocks through guided play and conversation. Preschool teachers and the community become more knowledgeable about the importance of early math and science learning, as it impacts both school readiness and later math success. The ELC will be implementing the program during 2013-2014.
Promoting Inclusive Child Care

The Early Learning Coalition of Manatee County (ELC) strives to strengthen Manatee’s child care system to more effectively support the needs of children with disabilities and their families.

The ELC helps to expand child care options for children with disabilities and their families by supporting the inclusion of children with special needs in early childhood settings. Services are available to providers to enhance staff’s knowledge and competence in serving children with disabilities or behavioral challenges.

Services include training and technical assistance, information regarding community resources and environmental adaptations.

A toll-free local Warm Line is available to any early care and education providers requesting information relating to the disability and special health care needs issues of children. Staff responds to Warm Line calls within 24 hours, and frequently discusses “next steps” with parents of children demonstrating needs for further evaluation.

The ELC Inclusion Specialist performs observations in classrooms, makes recommendations for accommodations and modifications. The ELC offers at least two large group training sessions quarterly, along with many additional on-site training sessions that are provider specific. All parents of special needs children are informed of our inclusion services when they utilize the Child Care Resource & Referral service.

Additionally, our Inclusion Specialist presented at the regional One Goal Conference on promoting positive social interactions and play modifications for children with disabilities. The ELC Inclusion Specialist currently serves on the Board of Directors of the Family Network on Disabilities for Sarasota and Manatee Counties. ELC staff members are active members of the Florida Association of Infant Mental Health.

The ELC also participated in the Learn the Signs – Act Early grant from the Florida Department of Health. This program offered materials for the families served by nine family child care home providers on developmental milestones, including how to identify signs that a child may benefit from evaluation and early intervention.

“Because of ELC my family is able to function as a whole.”
2012-2013 Total Funding

The Early Learning Coalition received funding from federal, state and local sources in excess of $18,490,000 during this fiscal year. Over 79% of School Readiness funds and 95% of Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) funds were spent directly on child care services through our local child care providers and school district. Our overall administrative costs for these programs were under 4%.

**ELC was awarded additional grant dollars in excess of $1,686,000.**

Manatee County Government ______________________ $1,427,243
School Board of Manatee County ______________________ 114,231
United Way ______________________ 87,000
Florida Department of Education ______________________ 30,820
Helios Foundation ______________________ 21,431
Manatee County Housing Authority ______________________ 4,000
Wells Fargo Foundation ______________________ 1,000
Conquistador Historical Society ______________________ 500

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**School Readiness Expenditures by Category**

- Direct Cost Slot Dollars: 77.60%
- Administration: 4.11%
- Non-Direct Expenditures: 8.52%
- Quality: 11.84%

**VPK Expenditures by Category**

- Direct Cost Slot Dollars: 95.92%
- Administration: 3.84%
- Outreach, Awareness and Monitoring: 0.24%
A Heart Felt Thank You To Our Partners

All Children’s Hospital
American Red Cross
Children’s Medical Services
Department of Children and Families Child Care Licensing
East Coast Migrant Head Start
Easter Seals of Southwest Florida
Family Network on Disabilities
Family Partnership Center
Florida Association for the Education of Young Children
Florida Family Child Care Home Association
Gulfcoast Early Steps
Healthy Start Coalition
Hernando DeSoto Historical Society
Home Child Care Providers Association of Manatee County
HOPE Family Services
Kiwanis Club of Bradenton
Lions Club of Bradenton
Manatee Association for the Education of Young Children
Manatee Children’s Services
Manatee Community Action Agency/Head Start, CATCH grant
Manatee County Chamber of Commerce
Manatee County Government Children’s Services Advisory Board
Manatee County Housing Authority
Manatee Education Foundation
Manatee Hope
Manatee Parenting Education Coalition (MPEC)/Manatee Infant Mental Health Association
Manatee Sheriff’s Department
Manatee Sunrise Kiwanis Club
People Assisting the Homeless (PATH) Coalition
Pinellas County Schools Child Care Worker Training Program
Pittsburgh Pirates Organization/Bradenton Marauders
Police Athletic League of Manatee
Redlands Christian Migrant Association
Safe Children’s Coalition
Safe Kids Coalition (All Children’s Hospital)
School District of Manatee County
State College of Florida and the Foundation for State College of Florida
Suncoast Partnership to End Homelessness
Suncoast Workforce
Take Stock in Children
Training and Technical Assistance Support Center, University of Central Florida
Turning Points/Galvano One Stop Center
Twiga Foundation
United Way of Manatee County
Whole Child Manatee

“I am a grandparent with custody of my grandkids. If it was not for the funding from ELC I would not be able to pay for day care. I work a full time job and have peace of mind knowing that my grandkids are in a safe place.”
“I have taken on four kids in the last three years. I would never have been able to work to support my family without the support of the ELC. I don’t know how the Relative Caregiver & Foster Care programs would work without the support of the Early Learning Coalition.”

– Parent

“This assistance has given our family the ability to go back to school. In one more year we will no longer need the assistance and we will be considered ‘self-sufficient’. This is what the program was intended for! A hand up not a hand-out. This program has helped us get on our feet and move forward as a family.”

– Parent