Annual Report 2015-2016

Early Learning Coalition
OF MANATEE COUNTY

Investing in the future of children through early care and education
A Message from the Chief Executive Officer

This past year, the Coalition grew significantly in terms of its programs, its staff, and most importantly – its positive community impact.

As you read the narratives and review the graphs contained within the pages of this Annual Report, I am sure you will agree that significant accomplishments have been achieved in 2015-16. Some of those that I am especially proud of, are mentioned below.

The Coalition was once again nominated for the Tampa Bay Business Journal Non-Profit of the Year award, this time by the International Save the Children Organization. Having won the Non-Profit of the Year award in 2015, I am very happy and proud to announce that ELC Manatee was selected once again as one of three finalists out of the many nominations throughout the Tampa Bay Metropolitan Area for 2016. No organization has ever been selected as the winner two years in a row, but to be a finalist again was a great honor.

Our signature pilot program, Early Steps to School Success (ESSS), provides early childhood education services to pregnant women and children birth to five years of age, education services to their parents, and ongoing staff training to the community’s early childhood educators.

A new endeavor for the Coalition this year is our Nemours BrightStart! Complete Program for Early Literacy Success. This program was implemented in November 2015 with nine centers and 17 classrooms involved in the initial launch, impacting over 200 students. We are very proud of the Nemours program, and our expert staff who have been enhancing it with great success.

The Early Learning Community Task Force was created, bringing together the Coalition, Manatee County School District, Manatee Community Action Agency and many other community partners to share a common goal of making sure our children are ready to learn at Kindergarten entry. The Task Force has implemented the ground work for the creation of a unique identifier number for children, which will allow the Coalition to track the significance and outcomes of all our programs.

On the next page, you’ll read about NEXTGEN Family Magazine and two prestigious awards that were received this past year. NEXTGEN continues to be one of the best educational information resources for all families in Manatee County.

I wish to express my sincere appreciation to our volunteer Board of Directors, many of whom left this year due to term limits. We thank them for their years of valuable service. And I want to especially thank the Coalition staff, whose dedication to quality early care and education for all of Manatee County’s children is immeasurable.

I look forward to 2016-2017 as a year of continued growth and endless possibilities.

Sincerely,
Paul A. Sharff, Chief Executive Officer
NEXTGEN Family Magazine: FMA Silver Charlie Award

NEXTGEN Family Magazine, published by the Early Learning Coalition of Manatee County, was honored to be the recipient of the Florida Magazine Association (FMA) ‘Silver Charlie Award: Best New Magazine 2015’ at an awards ceremony in Orlando in August 2015.

Recognizing achievements by Florida magazines since 1957, FMA’s annual Charlie Awards competition crowns publishers, writers, editors, artists, photographers, printers, marketers, and others as the best among their peers in scores of categories. Juried by recognized out-of-state magazine and newspaper professionals, and college journalism professors, hundreds of entries vie for first, second and third place awards—Charlie, Silver and Bronze.

This amazing statewide recognition of NEXTGEN – which has a distribution of 35,000 copies bi-monthly into the backpacks of all elementary students in Manatee County - is something for the entire team to be very proud of. So many people have played such a huge part in this success since its inception in May 2014, from those who contribute articles and ideas, to those who help deliver the magazine.

2015 Business & Education Partnership Award

NEXTGEN and the ELC were honored at the 25th Annual Manatee County Chamber of Commerce and Manatee County School Board Business & Education Partnership Awards with the prestigious Barry Jones Business Partner Empowerment Award. Named after the late Barry Jones, Tampa Bay Rays Community Representative. This award recognizes the partner who empowers others to make a difference for our schools, teachers, and students.

The magazine was recognized for our distribution partnership throughout the school district and the on-going role the ELC plays in working to enhance the lives of Manatee County children on a daily basis.

The judges commented: “This wonderfully put together publication provides local families with an amazing resource guide and continues to inform, educate and bring enjoyment to its readership through inspiring content and color.”

Cradle To College Campaign

The Cradle to College Campaign is in year two of its partnership between the Association of Early Learning Coalitions and Florida Prepaid College Board. This year’s focus was Starting is Believing. Attending is Achieving - The foundation of success in academics and life begins early, with VPK attendance and starting to save for college.
The Early Learning Coalition of Manatee County is a 501(c)(3) non-profit agency that in the years since its creation, continues to mature and evolve in many aspects: organization, fiscal management, visibility, and strength and involvement of board members.

The growth of the Coalition as the leader in early education and care in Manatee County is reflected in the decisive steps made by the Board: strategic planning to foster goals and objectives, innovative programs, and a continual emphasis on improving the education and care provided to our children.

**Our Programs and Services:**
- Child Care Resource and Referral
- Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK)
- School Readiness
- Early Literacy Initiatives
- Quality Initiatives
- Professional Development
- Developmental Screening & 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.

Find out more about the Early Learning Coalition and its services and programs by picking up our brochure in English or Spanish at the ELC Office.

The ELC lobby is open, airy and inviting to families. The open space and variety of toys, books, and games provides a safe place for children to play and interact with each other.
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, 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, Stand Down for the Homeless, the Children’s Parade, and Party in the Park.

While CCR&R helps families find child care, it also provides information about other valuable family resources in the community. The CCR&R telephone service is available Monday through Thursday from 7:00am-6:00pm and from 8:00am-12:00 noon on Fridays. Website access is always available. These services are provided at no charge.

Promoting Early Literacy

As part of the initiative for Family Literacy Opportunities, the Coalition received over 40,000 low cost books from grant opportunities through First Book.

A book is given to every child that comes to the office and at every community event at which the Coalition participates. Bookmarks labeled with "I’m a Reader" are provided with each book. Parents receive a "Reading Tips for Parents of Preschoolers" that offers fun ways they can help their child(ren) become happy and confident readers.

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

Over 36,000 books were distributed during Every Child a Reader and Literacy for the Holidays; at outreach events such as the Manatee County Fair and Lakewood Ranch Halloween Boofest; to Manatee County School District as part of the Grade Level Reading Campaign, and to United Way to help prevent the summer learning loss.

The Early Literacy Coordinator implemented the Raising a Reader program at five early learning centers serving 310 children, and provides training to 28 early childhood teachers and directors. Raising a Reader is an evidence-based early literacy and family engagement program that helps parents build the habit of book sharing. Each week a child brings home a bag of high quality books. To help sustain the habit of borrowing and sharing books at end of the program families are connected to their local library.
Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK)

Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) is free for all four-year-old children in Florida. Families do not have 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 1st and must be a Florida resident. The Early Learning Coalition of Manatee County (ELC) provides applications and information to parents, and child care providers.

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.
School Readiness - Child Care Funding Assistance

The School Readiness Program offers financial assistance to low-income families for early child education and care so families can become financially self-sufficient and their young children can be successful in school in the future.

Services vary based on individual need and range from extended day to extended year and school age care in some instances.

The program takes into account a child’s physical, social, emotional, and intellectual development; involves parents as their child’s first teacher; prepares children to be ready for school; and gives parents information about child development and other topics of interest.

For general questions or to see if your child is eligible for School Readiness please contact the Family Services Department at (941) 757-2900.
The Child Development Team strives to detect developmental delays as early as possible. Early detection of potential developmental delays allow children to reach their fullest potential and enter kindergarten ready to learn.

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 early care and education providers to increase staff knowledge and competence in serving children with disabilities or behavioral challenges. These services include training, onsite technical assistance, community resource information and environmental adaptations.

A toll-free Warm Line is available to parents and early care and education providers needing information related to the disability or special health care needs of children, birth to five years of age.

The ELC partners with the Manatee County School Board and local agencies to participate in community events.

Child Development staff competed 1,837 Ages and Stages Questionnaires developmental screenings. Of these 1,837 developmental screenings, 447 demonstrated potential development delays and families were provided with Individual Early Care Plans which include age and skill specific activities for families to use at home. The families of 12 children identified as needing further evaluation and were provided assistance in coordinating referrals to other community agencies.

### Professional Development

The coalition offered to school readiness program providers, staff, and parents, training and technical assistance in the following areas:

- Early Learning Standards
- Child Screenings and Assessment
- Developmentally Appropriate Curricula and Character Development
- Teacher-Child Interactions
- Age-Appropriate Discipline Practices
- Health and Safety
- Nutrition
- First Aid
- Recognition of Communicable Diseases
- Child Abuse Detection and Prevention

#### 2015-2016 Professional Development Statistics:

- 116 sessions provided on 61 individual topics
- 1108 student contacts
- **417.5 training hours**

Coalition staff offered several training sessions supporting quality infant and toddler care topics including understanding why children bite, early signs of Autism, and brain development of the young child.

Coalition staff provided seven sessions of the American Red Cross Adult and Pediatric First Aid/CPR/AED course to a total of 49 participants.

#### Highlights of professional development activities included:

- Florida Early Learning and Development Standards for Birth Through Five
- Annual Early Childhood Conference for Providers
- Coalition staff collaborated in presenting workshops at the AELC Fall Symposium in November, 2015
Grant Expenditures

2015-2016 Total Funding

The Early Learning Coalition of Manatee County (ELC) received federal and state funding in excess of $17,000,000 during this fiscal year. Over 78% of School Readiness funds and 96% 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 5.0% and 3.76% respectively.

The ELC was awarded additional local grant dollars in excess of $1,867,000.

A Heart Felt Thank You To Our Partners

All Children’s Hospital
American Red Cross
Angus Graham Foundation
BMO Harris Bank
Brighthouse Networks
CareerSource Suncoast
Department of Children and Families Child Care Licensing
Family Partnership Center
Florida Association for the Education of Young Children
Florida Family Child Care Home Association
Florida Prepaid College Board
Florida Winefest & Auction
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
Lakewood Ranch Community Fund
Manatee Association for the Education of Young Children
Manatee Children’s Services
Manatee Community Action Agency/HS, CATCH Grant
Manatee Community Foundation
Manatee County Chamber of Commerce
Manatee County Children’s Services Advisory Board
Manatee County Housing Authority
Manatee Education Foundation
Manatee County Sheriff’s Office
Manatee Sunrise Kiwanis Club
Pittsburgh Pirates Organization/Bradenton Marauders
PNC Foundation
Police Athletic League of Manatee
Rays Baseball Foundation
Safe Children’s Coalition
Save the Children
School District of Manatee County
Suncoast Partnership to End Homelessness
Take Stock in Children
Turning Points/Galvano One Stop Center
United Way of Manatee County
The Early Learning Coalition was thrilled to bring the Nemours BrightStart! Program for Early Literacy Success (NBS!) to Manatee County in 2015.

NBS! is a program dedicated to the prevention of reading failure in young children. Started in 2005 through the generous funding of the Nemours Foundation (a large pediatric health system), NBS! is an example of how Nemours understands that child health and learning are intricately linked, and that reading failure is a major child health issue.

Since 2005, NBS! has screened thousands of children in schools, child care centers and the community using a standardized early literacy screening tool — Get Ready to Read (GRTR). They developed a unique and highly effective instructional curriculum to assist in closing the reading readiness achievement gap for struggling, diverse young learners, before they enter elementary school.

Through the screening and intervention efforts, NBS! has identified and provided high quality, early literacy instruction to over 3,000 young children at risk for reading failure. In 2010, the curriculum was published and distributed through Kaplan Early Learning Company, Inc. as the Nemours BrightStart! Complete Program for Early Literacy Success, Level One and Level Two.

The ELC implemented NBS! in November 2015. Nine centers and 17 classrooms were involved in the initial launch of the pilot program, impacting approximately 220 students. Ten Directors and/or Assistant Directors, along with 16 teachers and six Early Learning Coalition staff members, attended the required training.

The training consisted of 12 intensive hours of curriculum-specific hands on instruction with the lessons and materials, in addition to explaining the history, philosophy, and rationale of the NBS! program. After completing the training and demonstrating mastery, the teachers and directors were prepared to competently implement the program.

The coalition presented each provider with a Nemours BrightStart! Lesson Plan Kit, Manipulatives Kit, and book set. Each teacher was assigned a coach to serve as an essential resource for the program. The NBS! Coaches made weekly visits to each classroom to maintain the fidelity of the program and give any support that was needed.

The teachers and coaches found that the NBS! Curriculum showed extensive evidence of improvement, not just in the students’ ability to read, but also in the overall quality of the classroom as a whole.

In the fall of 2015, 116 pre-K children were given the early literacy screener, Get Ready to Read-Revised (GRTR-R) and the 26-item Letter Name/Letter Sound (LN/LS) assessments as a pre-test. Of the 116 children, 50 qualified by scoring standard scores less than 90, indicative of below average skills.

To determine growth, 38 qualifying students and 40 randomly selected non-qualifying students, who still actively participated in the program, were re-tested mid-year with the GRTR-R & the LN/LS assessments. The graph and tables below illustrate the growth, on average, of the group of children who qualified and received the NBS! program and those children who did not qualify. At mid-year, the majority of the NBS! group moved to the average range, closing the significant gap between them and their non-qualifying peers.
**Early Steps to School Success**

The *Early Steps to School Success program (a Save the Children program)* brought the love of learning to the families of Manatee County after it was launched in the Fall of 2015. Parents and children in the 10 families who enrolled learned how to share the joy of reading together.

Our trained Early Childhood Coordinators brought book exchanges, parenting groups, fun, and educational activities, directly into the families’ homes. Staff helped children with language, social and emotional development, and also equipped parents with the skills needed to successfully support children’s growth and prepare school readiness. All services were FREE.

Melanie and her four-month old daughter, Esmeralda, signed up for Early Steps to School Success in March 2016, and she described it as ‘life-changing’.

When asked the following questions, here was Melanie’s response to the program that is already growing on a monthly basis as more families in the local community enroll.

**What interested you about the ESSS Program when you first heard about it?**

“I heard the program was about books and reading and I really wanted my baby to learn to read. The literacy part of the program was the most important to me.”

**Describe your experience with the ESSS Program so far.**

“Life-changing. The coordinator has helped me learn parenting skills and helped me get out of the depression I was in. She helped me to prepare and get ready for the baby.”

**How do you think this program will impact your baby in the future?**

“My baby will be more advanced, have a bigger vocabulary, she will be able to communicate well, and she will be able to reach her milestones.”

**What would you say to other moms considering the ESSS Program?**

“It’s an excellent program that helps with parenting skills, but not just with that, they support and understand you, giving you good advice and getting you ready for your baby.”

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**Deputy Friendly’s Book Club**

The Deputy Friendly pilot program began in January 2016. This collaboration with the Manatee County Sheriff’s Department, is designed to humanize children’s perceptions of law enforcement and their work, and improve rapport between children and law enforcement.

The program is designed for children aged three to five. The program involves monthly visits by the deputies to center classrooms, a book for centers to add to their library, and follow-up activities conducted by the teachers. 20 early childhood facilities participated in phase one of this program, including three Manatee County School District afterschool sites.
EARLY LEARNING COALITION OF MANATEE COUNTY

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