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

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 once again been achieved in 2016-2017.

The Coalition was again nominated for the prestigious Tampa Bay Business Journal Non-Profit of the Year award. Having won the award in 2015, and having been chosen as a finalist in 2016, I am very happy and proud to announce that ELC Manatee was selected as one of three finalists out of the many nominations throughout the Tampa Bay Metropolitan Area for 2017.

This is fantastic recognition of the work that we do, and something all of us are very proud of.

We embarked on several new programs over the year, all of which are explained in more detail throughout this report. ELC Manatee continues to partner with many agencies and organizations on various initiatives that help local children, and we have a key voice as part of The Suncoast Campaign for Grade-Level Reading.

The ground work has also been laid, and the program developed, for assigning unique identifier numbers for children, which will allow the Coalition to track the significance and outcomes of all our programs.

Our family magazine NEXTGEN, now in its third year, continues to grow in strength and is one of the best educational information resources for all families in Manatee County.

Finally, 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 2017-2018 as we keep working diligently each day to ensure success for Manatee County’s children and families.

Sincerely,

Paul A. Sharff
Chief Executive Officer
PEARLS

PEARLS, Preschool Emergency Alert Response Learning System, is a partnership with local law enforcement (Palmetto Police, Bradenton Police, and Manatee County Sheriff’s Department) to develop a program on ways to handle emergency situations.

In addition to providing licensed childcare providers in Manatee County training and awareness of potential dangers, we are also establishing a notification system. Law Enforcement will notify the Coalition of significant police activity, and the Coalition will send out a phone notification to alert the childcare providers within an approximate 2-mile radius of that activity.

'The STEAM Machine'

'The STEAM Machine' hit the road in the local community earlier this summer and has since been visiting childcare centers providing one hour sessions that focus on Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and/or Mathematics.

Promoting STEAM education gives children the opportunity to attain essential skills to connect ideas and integrate knowledge across disciplines, while capturing their attention.

ELC has partnered with the School District of Manatee County as ‘The STEAM Machine’ program grows, and would like to thank Home Depot for their fantastic support in supplying materials for the children to use.

WAVE Fitness

The WAVE Fitness program is a prevention-driven, health and wellness program designed to support preschool children of Manatee County in achieving goals for improving long-term health and wellness. It was piloted over the summer at four locations with 90 VPK and school-aged children in the program and, after a 10-week assessment by the WAVE coaches, there was already a strong improvement in key areas.

This led to a second phase implemented in the fall - with 173 VPK children involved. The ELC hopes, with community support, to continue to expand WAVE Fitness given the major need to address rising childhood obesity in the country.

Statistics have proven that well-designed, targeted functional fitness programs implemented at learning locations have significant, direct effect on reducing body mass index (BMI) levels, preventing obesity, and improving academic success.

Additionally, the program includes key components of the 5-2-1-0 Let’s Go & activities that promote healthy eating and nutritional awareness.
About the Early Learning Coalition

The Early Learning Coalition of Manatee County, Inc. 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

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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.
**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 they provide is updated immediately in our database, allowing anyone looking for Manatee County child care options to request a list of providers and the services they offer.** 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. These services are provided at no charge.

While CCR&R helps families find child care, it also provides information about other valuable community resources. This information is available in our lobby, on our website and at community events in which the ELC participates.

**Promoting Early Literacy**

As part of the initiative for Family Literacy Opportunities, the Coalition received over 42,000 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 that the Coalition participates in. Bookmarks labeled with "I'm a Reader" are provided with each book. Parents receive a "Reading Tips for Parents of Preschoolers" fact sheet 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 38,000 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 program, and to United Way to help with the summer learning loss program.

Our Early Literacy Coordinator implemented the Raising a Reader program at seven early learning centers serving 355 children, and provided training to 32 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.

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, a summer program consisting of 300 instructional hours, or a Specialized Instructional Services (SIS) program which takes place outside the traditional classroom setting and is designed for 4-year-olds with special needs.

Those We Serve

In the 2016-2017 fiscal year, the Early Learning Coalition of Manatee County served 4,298 Children
126 VPK Program Providers

Total Percentage of VPK Payments by Program Type

VPK Summer 2.06%
VPK School Year 97.94%

VPK Providers by Type

Licensed Private Center 69.84%
Public Schools 23.02%
Specialized Instruction Services 5.56%
Private Schools 1.58%
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.

The program considers 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.

Family Portal

In 2015, the Office of Early Learning (OEL) introduced the Family Portal, which is a comprehensive statewide system where parents can apply for VPK and School Readiness online. The Family Portal can be accessed using any smart phone, tablet, or computer with internet access. Families can upload documents supporting eligibility, sign applications electronically, manage their waiting list status and revalidation for school readiness, and print out VPK certificates of eligibility, allowing the entire application process to be completed online.

Those We Serve

In the 2016-2017 fiscal year, the Early Learning Coalition of Manatee County's School Readiness served 4,455 Children 151 Program Providers
Early detection of potential developmental delays allows 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.

Coalition staff participates in the Healthy Start Manatee community meetings. The ELC Inclusion Specialist is a Certified Passenger Safety Technician and participates in car seat safety checks. An ELC staff member is a member of the Florida Association of Infant Mental Health. The ELC partners with the Manatee County School Board and local agencies to participate in community events.

Child Development staff competed 2,110 Ages and Stages Questionnaires developmental screenings. Of these 2,110 developmental screenings 669 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 20 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 Assessments
- Developmentally Appropriate Curricula and Character Development
- Teacher-Child Interactions
- Age-Appropriate Discipline Practices
- Health and Safety
- Core Competencies for ECE Practitioners
- First Aid/CPR/AED
- Relationship Building

#### 2016-2017 Professional Development Statistics:

- 137 sessions provided on 82 individual topics
- 1309 student contacts (duplicate)
- **417.5 training hours**

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

Coalition staff provided eleven sessions of the American Red Cross Adult and Pediatric First Aid/CPR/AED course to a total of 76 participants.

#### Highlights of professional development activities included:

- Florida Core Competencies for Early Care and Education Practitioners
- Florida Early Learning and Developmental Standards
- Annual Early Childhood Conference for Providers
- Coalition staff presented workshops at the AELC Symposium in February, 2017.

PAGE 8 | EARLY LEARNING COALITION OF MANATEE COUNTY, INC.
Early Steps To School Success (A Save The Children Program)

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. The program has served 45 children in our home visiting component, and 64 in our Raising a Reader component.

Our trained Early Childhood Coordinators brought book exchanges, developmental screenings, educational activities, and fun directly into the families’ homes. Coordinators focused on language, social and emotional, cognitive, and physical development. Parents were encouraged to implement new skills with their child in between visits and to support their child’s growth, preparing them for school. Parent-child groups occurred once a month to connect the families in the program. Our Coordinators also worked directly with teachers and parents of pre-K students to encourage reading at home. Book bags were sent home weekly and parents were encouraged to read, sing, or share a story with their child. All services were FREE.

Nemours BrightStart! Program (NBS!)

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.

The ELC implemented NBS! in November 2015. 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.

Deputy Friendly

The Deputy Friendly program began in January 2016 as a pilot, and continues to expand. 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 and involves monthly visits by the deputies to school classrooms, a book for centers to add to their library, and follow-up activities conducted by the teachers. Twenty early childhood facilities participated in phase one of this program. In 2016-2017, 28 facilities, making a total of 41 classrooms, participated in phase two.

Kindermusik

Kindermusik is dedicated to using the power of music to help children grow during the years most critical to brain development. Each kit includes developmentally appropriate, safety-tested instruments and manipulatives to enhance music-based learning activities.

The Level Two curriculum encourages older toddlers to initiate their own ideas and explore their creativity. The Level Three curriculum engages preschoolers’ natural love of music and activates their imaginations. Currently 80 children aged one to five are using the program at Palma Sola Early Learning Academy.
2016-2017 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 4.9% and 4% respectively. The ELC was awarded additional local grant dollars in excess of $1,900,000.

A Heart Felt Thank You To Our Partners

All Children’s Hospital  
American Red Cross  
Angus Graham Family Foundation  
BMO Harris Bank  
Bradenton Police Department  
BrightHouse/Spectrum Network  
CareerSource Suncoast  
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  
First Book  
Florida Association for the Education of Young Children  
Florida Department of Health in Manatee County  
Florida Department of Health’s Child Care Home Association  
Florida Prepaid College Board  
Florida Winefest & Auction  
FSU Autism Institute  
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  
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 Community Foundation  
Manatee County Chamber of Commerce  
Manatee County Children’s Services Advisory Board  
Manatee County Housing Authority  
Manatee Education Foundation  
Manatee Hope  
Manatee Infant Mental Health Association  
Manatee Public Library System  
Manatee County Sheriff’s Office  
Manatee Performing Arts Center  
Manatee Sunrise Kiwanis Club  
Michael Saunders Community Foundation  
MLK Day of Service  
Palmetto Police Department  
People Assisting the Homeless (PATH) Coalition  
Pinellas County Schools Child Care Worker Training Program  
Pittsburgh Pirates Organization/Bradenton Marauders  
Police Athletic League of Manatee  
Raising a Reader Network  
Rays Baseball Foundation  
Redlands Christian Migrant Association  
Safe Children’s Coalition  
Save the Children Network  
School District of Manatee County  
SOLVE House  
State College of Florida and the Foundation for SCF  
Suncoast Campaign for Grade-Level Reading  
Suncoast Partnership to End Homelessness  
Take Stock in Children  
Training and Technical Assistance Support Center, UCF  
Twiga Foundation  
United Way Suncoast  
Whole Child Manatee
Special Recognition

**Cracked Fairytales**

TWO highly successful “Cracked Fairytales” events took place in the past year as part of the ELC’s partnership with the Manatee Performing Arts Center (MPAC).

On December 7th, almost 500 excited children, most of whom were VPK students, attended a stage production of Disney favorites, such as Beauty and the Beast and Frozen – complete with artificial snow falling from the ceiling at the grand finale. Books and backpacks were given to each child. The ELC would like to thank the Johnston Family Fund of the Manatee Community Foundation for their generous sponsorship of the December event.

On May 17th, almost 600 children attended the second performance of the year, and again were treated to Disney favorites on stage, and enjoyed a “meet and greet” with the characters afterward as they received their books.

ELC would like to thank everyone at MPAC for partnering on these fantastic events that give many of the children their first opportunity to attend the theatre – we look forward to more shows next year!

**5th Annual Jim Boyd State Representative Golf Classic**

The 5th Annual ELC of Manatee County Golf Classic hosted by State Representative Jim Boyd was held at IMG Golf Club Academy on November 4th and was again a resounding success.

The event is the Coalition’s largest fundraiser and has become a big favorite in the local golf calendar, with 104 players taking part. ELC would like to thank our Title Sponsor - US Sugar - and our other major sponsors for their fantastic support as significant funds were raised to support ELC programs and the children in our community.

**Cradle To College Partnership**

ELC again led the way in the second year of the exciting Cradle to College™ partnership, which supports Florida’s Voluntary Prekindergarten Program (VPK) in conjunction with the Association of Early Learning Coalitions, and the Florida Prepaid College Board.

Staff were involved in the planning and design of take-home folders and activities for students and their families. Growth charts and posters were distributed to VPK providers statewide. ELC families across the state then had the opportunity – via information in email blasts – to use an exclusive promo code to win a Two-Year College Plan worth $8000, and save on college plan application fees.
THANK YOU TO OUR 16/17 BOARD MEMBERS

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