



# Message From Our CEO

The 2021-22 fiscal year saw the Early Learning Coalition of Manatee County (ELC) navigate yet more unique challenges – and also deal with incredibly profound sadness.

On January 12th, 2022, we suddenly lost our Chief Executive Officer, Paul Sharff, who tragically passed away, leaving a huge void for so many people to fill. Paul was our leader, inspirational figurehead, a huge personality, and on a personal level, my close friend and mentor. When I was appointed by the ELC board as Interim CEO just a few days after we lost Paul, it was the most surreal moment of my life. But I knew that Paul would have wanted me to carry on his legacy, stabilize our staff, and, most importantly, keep ELC operating as the outstanding agency it had become under his guidance.

When Paul, who became CEO at the Coalition in 2008, moved to Bradenton from West Virginia in 1988, no one could have predicted the legacy he would leave behind almost 35 years later. Driven by a relentless determination to give local children the best possible chance of success, Paul grew ELC into one of the largest non-profits in the County serving over 6,000 children every year.

We were already halfway through an unprecedented year in our field when Paul passed. Still, I have to pay tribute to our outstanding Board of Directors, and my amazing staff, for supporting me, showing incredible resilience, and staying true to the mission and vision of the agency.

When I say staying true, that is to the three words that define us – Early Learning and Coalition. By that, I mean that Early Learning is our core mission; it's what we do. We should always be the leader in that space in Manatee County. There are many different aspects to our daily work, but the vision must keep us on the path of what we are here to do: giving local children the best chance at success when they start school. We are given substantial funding from the State, Manatee County local government, and other funders and donors for that specific purpose, and it must be at the heart of everything we do.



The third word in our agency name is Coalition. The very definition of "coalition" is to bring people together for a greater good or cause. That's where ELC has to be a standard bearer. How can we help others? How can we use our resources to get things done? What support can we offer to other non-profits and agencies who work so hard every day to help local children and families?



That is an essential part of the vision – if ELC has a way of helping, whether that is resources, infrastructure, expertise, or helping with connections, we must always do that.

And what I think is absolutely critical when you are the steward of millions of dollars of public money is that your vision aligns with your values – to act with dignity, professionalism, full transparency, and absolute fiscal responsibility. I believe that on any given day, we should be able to throw open the doors for people to see our practices, policies, accounts, and budgets. When you are fortunate enough to be given public money, you must always take the responsibility of spending each dollar as wisely as possible.

As you will read in this report, ELC's budget in the 21/22 fiscal year was almost \$34 million. Again, we were responsible for distributing millions of dollars in American Rescue Plan Act funding to our child care providers through stabilization grants as they continue to work through the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has changed so much of the child care landscape. We continued to assist with technical support, professional development, workforce challenges, and many outreach initiatives as we executed all the funding that came to us to assist our Providers, local children, and families.

I am surrounded by talented, committed people who want to enhance the lives of the children we have every year in our programs, support their families, and look after our child care Providers, who are the front line. To be the CEO is an honor and a privilege for me. I want us to keep moving the needle and do everything we can to meet the challenges. I want us to build on the outstanding legacy that Paul left us...

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Darrell King".

**Darrell King**  
**Chief Executive Officer**

**(941) 757-2900**

600 8th Avenue West, Suite 100  
Palmetto, Florida 34221

*The information contained in  
this annual report is based on  
data collected from  
July 1, 2021 - June 30, 2022*





The Early Learning Coalition of Manatee County (ELC) held its inaugural Stand for Children Day Luncheon on June 1st, 2022, at the Bradenton Area Convention Center. With nearly 400 people in attendance, the event raised financial support for ELC programs and the Children's Guardian Fund, who benefitted from a \$25,000 ELC donation from the event proceeds.



The donation to the Children's Guardian Fund helped meet emergency needs and enabled normalcy and enrichment in the lives of children in the Guardian ad Litem program.

Annually, Stand for Children Day raises awareness of critical issues many children face in the United States, including quality education, child care, access to health insurance and medical services, appropriate public school and program funding, and teacher education.

The Luncheon also honored the memory of former ELC CEO Paul Sharff, who was a Guardian ad Litem himself. There was a special tribute to Paul and his dedication to children in our community from Mary Glass, President of the Manatee Education Foundation, as well as a video message from former Florida Senate President Bill Galvano.

Funds raised through sponsorships, ticket sales, and cash pledges on the day of the event also went toward retrofitting ELC's new bus, the Explorer.

## The ELC Explorer!

ELC was awarded two grants between December 2021 and January 2022 to help create a new STEAM Machine mobile classroom and book bus – the ELC Explorer! One grant was from The Selby Foundation for \$30,000, and the second was from PNC Bank for \$6,000.

This new Explorer has a tailgate that allows disabled children to access the bus to participate in STEAM lessons and literacy programs. The Selby Foundation grant contributed towards the exterior and interior buildout, custom wrap, and high-end technology that delivers an amazing learning experience to local children. The PNC Bank grant helped towards interior buildout and STEAM program materials.

The STEAM curriculum focuses on science, technology, engineering, the arts, and math. ELC'S STEAM curriculum engages early learners in real projects within authentic environments and lays the academic groundwork for math and science.



# About the Early Learning Coalition

## Early Learning Coalition of Manatee County, Inc.

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.*



The ELC utilizes a fleet of Mobile Learning Labs and Educational Busses to take STEAM Education, Childhood Health Programs, and Literacy on the road directly to schools, and child care providers across Manatee County. For information regarding Mobile Learning, please contact Community Engagement at (941) 757-2900 ext. 2500.



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



## School Readiness - (SR) Child Care Funding Assistance

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

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.

During Fiscal Year 21/22, the Coalition offered funding assistance to all families on the school readiness waitlist. Exactly 1,433 families received invitations to complete their funding request and enroll their children in the child care providers of their choice, allowing them to continue their efforts towards reaching self-sufficiency.



In the 2021-2022 fiscal year, the Early Learning Coalition of Manatee County's School Readiness served:

**4,151 Children**  
**150 Program Providers**

## Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK)

*Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) is a free program designed to prepare four-year-old children for kindergarten and build the foundation for their educational success. VPK is available to all four year old's born on or before September 1st that reside in Florida, regardless of family income.*

The VPK program is designed to provide four-year-old's access to quality prekindergarten educational experiences and prepare Florida's children for kindergarten by developing the emotional, intellectual, and social skills they need to become 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.



In the 2021-2022 fiscal year, the Early Learning Coalition of Manatee County served:

**2,736 Children**  
**123 VPK Program Providers**

## Child Care Resource and Referral

Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) is the "front door" to the Early Learning Coalition's services. *It is a service available to assist all families seeking quality and affordable child care options and local community resources. CCR&R can also be used as a free marketing tool for legally operating providers in Manatee County, as the information they provide is updated immediately in our database.*

Parents are educated on how to identify quality care, informed about different types of care, and are encouraged to continue looking for quality when placing their children 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 NUMEROUS community events in which the ELC participates.



In the 2021-2022 fiscal year, the Early Learning Coalition of Manatee County provided:

**918 Child Care Referrals**



# Our Programs & Services

## Developmental Screening and Early Intervention

Early detection of potential developmental delays allows children to reach their fullest potential and enter kindergarten ready to learn.

The ELC helps 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 children's disability or special health care needs, birth to five years of age.

Coalition staff participates in the Healthy Start Manatee community meetings, and 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.

Screening & Assessment staff completed 2,289 Ages and Stages Questionnaires developmental screenings. Of these screenings, 574 demonstrated potential developmental 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 27 children who were identified as needing further evaluation were aided in coordinating referrals to other community agencies.

### Early Intervention Outcomes

Child Screenings	2,289
Child Assessments	574
Community Referrals	27

## Professional Development

*2021-2022 Professional Development Statistics (including annual Conference):*

- 72 sessions provided on 38 individual topics
- 779 student contacts
- 184.25 training hours

## NEXTGEN Family Magazine

NEXTGEN Family Magazine continues to go from strength to strength and remains the go-to resource for local families.

The magazine again showcased all that is good in the local community through articles, interviews, and pictures. Distribution remains at over 30,000 issues going to elementary school children in Manatee County, with an additional 5,000 issues being distributed to over 200 child care facilities, libraries, medical offices, hospitals, and other business offices throughout the county.



## Promoting Early Literacy

The Early Learning Coalition of Manatee County is dedicated to ensuring that every child and their families have access to high-quality educational children's books, resources, and opportunities. The ELC of Manatee brought educational continuity and activities related to early learning standards to neighborhoods in the community through its fleet-based programs serving children at local child care centers.

Friendly's Book Club focuses on building healthy relationships with local law enforcement and first responders while instilling a love of reading. Participating children received a book with every officer, deputy, or firefighter visit. The ELC of Manatee extended the program into "Safety Summer," teaching water safety, general safety, fire safety, and knowledge about first responders.

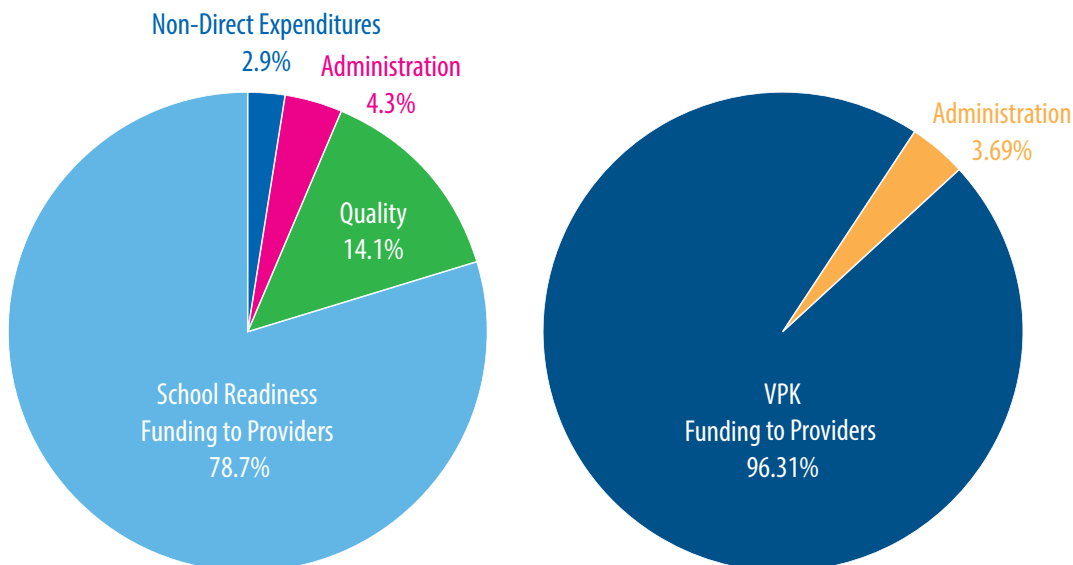
The Words on the Bus program highlights new vocabulary words, animated read-aloud, and activities that coordinate with the book or targeted vocabulary. The program brought book-embedded vocabulary to VPK sites, using the monthly spotlight book from the Soar in 4 program. Similarly, the ELC's STEAM program provided monthly visits to children in Kindergarten through 2nd grade at local Title I Elementary Schools, where children were presented with new vocabulary, a read-aloud that pertained to the concept, and hands-on activities.

With the help of its dedicated volunteers, the ELC of Manatee's ReadingPals program provided mentors to build foundational literacy and social-emotional skills with VPK children. Every week, the children and their mentor bond over a shared book and received a copy of the featured story to add to their at-home library. As part of the ELC's initiative for Family Literacy Opportunities, high-quality children's books with family tip stickers that share ideas for reading are distributed around the community. This past year, the ELC provided over 49,000 books to the children of Manatee County.

## Grant Expenditures

### 2021-2022 Total Funding

The Early Learning Coalition of Manatee County received federal and state funding totaling \$30,154,015 in the fiscal year. 78.7% of School Readiness funds and 96.31% of Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) funds were spent directly on child care services. Our administrative costs for these programs were 4.3% and 3.69% respectively. *Included in the state and federal funding was \$4,646,768 in CRRSA (Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Act) funding and \$4,400,00 in ARPA (American Rescue Plan Act) funding. ELC was also awarded an additional \$2,665,288 from local grants.*



# THANK YOU TO OUR 2021/2022 BOARD MEMBERS



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*Sponsorship by the Early Learning Coalition of Manatee County and the State of Florida, Division of Early Learning*  
Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services Registration #CH27655. A copy of the official registration and financial information may be obtained from the division of consumer services by calling toll-free 1-800-help-fla (435-7352) within the state or visiting their website [www.FloridaConsumerHelp.com](http://www.FloridaConsumerHelp.com). Registration does not imply endorsement, approval, or recommendation by the state.