



Message From Our CEO

The 2022-23 fiscal year saw the Early Learning Coalition of Manatee County (ELC) expend our largest ever budget, with over \$50 million invested in our child care providers, children, families, and the local community.

Once more, we were responsible for distributing huge sums in stabilization grants. Over \$20 million of American Rescue Plan Act Federal funding was awarded to our providers as we continued to support the child care industry during the many challenges that still remain as they work through the lingering effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

As you will read in this report, the administration costs for our two main programs remain at extremely low levels. Admin for the School Readiness program ran at 3.65%, and for the VPK program, admin costs sat at 4% for the year. Getting value for taxpayers' money is a bedrock of our mission. We pride ourselves in ensuring that the dollars that come into ELC are invested wisely into the 7,000 children enrolled in our programs and the providers who work so diligently to prepare those children for kindergarten.

On the opposite page, you can learn how we've invested significant sums of money in early intervention programs such as EarlyBird, Spot On, Mobile Evaluation, Baby STEAM, and various other initiatives. This continues to be at the core of our work: getting children ready for school. We believe that these new programs that can identify issues in children as early as possible will give them the best possible chance of being on the right path to educational success.

As always, early literacy is a mainstay of our work. We invested heavily by providing over 52,000 free books for local children. The ReadingPals program helped develop reading skills in over 100 VPK students who saw tremendous gains in their reading comprehension and built their at-home libraries as we provided books to take home. We're also proud to continue to invest significantly in the Books for Kids program, which expanded into kindergarten classrooms this year.

While we have all our State mandated and community educational programs, we're still fully committed to other programs that help us generate our own revenue streams - NEXTGEN Family Magazine and our two annual fundraisers. We were unbelievably proud to have reached the milestone of producing our 50th issue of NEXTGEN this past year. It continues to be a fantastic vehicle for the ELC to share information and for the entire community to be involved in.

In December, we had our 11th Annual Paul Sharff Memorial Golf Tournament, with 120 players at IMG Academy Golf Club. We're indebted to the ongoing support of State Senator Jim Boyd and State Representative Will Robinson, who continue to relentlessly advocate



for Manatee County's children in Tallahassee and raise awareness of the issues that early learning faces today. We receive a lot of Federal, State, and County funding, but the Golf Tournament allows us to support programs for which we don't have designated revenue, such as Mobile Evaluation.

Our other fundraiser in June was the second annual Stand for Children Day luncheon, which was a fantastic event attended by 350 people. The inaugural Paul Sharff Children's Champion Award went to Elena Cassella, Executive Director for Foundations for Dreams (FFD). FFD was also honored with a \$5,000 donation from the ELC to support the organization's important work. The proceeds of the luncheon funded ELC's new Spot On program, and we again thank the community and all of our sponsors for their commitment to these events.

As I reflect on what was an extremely busy but rewarding year for the agency, I would personally like to thank the Board of Directors for their unwavering support. I'd also like to pay tribute to the ELC staff. They strive to enhance the lives of our children every day in our programs, support their families, and look after the front-line workers within the child care centers. It is an honor and a privilege to be the CEO of this organization and to lead such talented and committed people. I am so proud of them.

Sincerely,

A stylized, handwritten signature of Darrell King in black ink.

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, 2022 - June 30, 2023



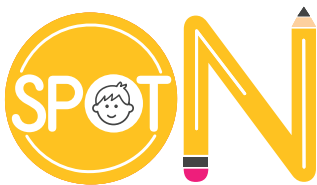
EarlyBird

The Early Learning Coalition of Manatee County (ELC) has implemented a new assessment tool across six child care centers named EarlyBird. This game-based evaluation assesses literacy and identifies potential reading challenges early before they become reading problems.

Administered on an iPad, EarlyBird is fun and easy to use as it utilizes engaging games to assess and score children's reading skills. EarlyBird was developed and scientifically validated at Boston Children's Hospital in partnership with faculty at the Florida Center for Reading Research.

The comprehensive results are given to teachers so that they can target these issues within the classroom and give more individualized help to struggling students. Students take the EarlyBird assessment three times throughout the school year. Once in the beginning, again in the middle of the school year, and a final time at the end of the school year. The assessments take about twenty minutes to complete.

The ELC is given immediate feedback from EarlyBird with resources for grouping and strategies that are shared with the teachers. There are family letters that go home as well to help families with their child's literacy. Additionally, there are next-step resources that come with the program based on the results the teachers get, and they can utilize them immediately in their lesson plans.



The Spot On Program seeks to reduce communication, self-regulation, and functional life skill deficits that may interfere with student progression in the early learning environment.

Many times, young children in preschool classrooms with limited social or academic communication abilities struggle to meet school expectations. These children may have access to therapy, but the carry-over between the therapeutic setting and home or school life is often unavailable. Spot On seeks to create teams of therapists, teachers, and families to support the child in all environments.

Spot On supports 30 minutes of professional development and collaboration per child per week. This same practice is also applied toward addressing skill concerns with self-regulation and functional life skills. These skills can be critical in the early learning setting to help children become more independent and make the social and academic gains necessary for kindergarten preparedness.

When bringing therapeutic practices into the classroom, the barriers children who struggle to communicate or self-regulate face are often lowered as suddenly their teachers have access to strategies to support their unique needs.

In the 22-23 fiscal year, ELC was awarded a grant of \$10,000 through the Manatee Community Foundation, and a further \$50,000 from the Bishop Parker Foundation, to help financially support Spot On. This was further supplemented by money raised at ELC fundraisers. The kindergarten readiness rates in Manatee County represent a call to professional action, and we feel Spot On answers this cry!



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 22/23, the Coalition offered funding assistance to all families on the school readiness waitlist. 1,876 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 2022-2023 fiscal year, the Early Learning Coalition of Manatee County's School Readiness served:

4,235 Children
151 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 2022-2023 fiscal year, the Early Learning Coalition of Manatee County served:

2,779 Children
119 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 2022-2023 fiscal year, the Early Learning Coalition of Manatee County provided:

972 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 2,356 Ages and Stages Questionnaires developmental screenings. Of these screenings, 567 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 62 children who were identified as needing further evaluation were aided in coordinating referrals to other community agencies.

Early Intervention Outcomes

Child Screenings	2,356
Child Assessments	574
Community Referrals	62

Professional Development

2022-2023 Professional Development Statistics (including annual Conference):

- 90 sessions provided on 57 individual topics
- 2,869 student contacts
- 296.7 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, along with celebrating its 50th issue in October/November 2022. 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.

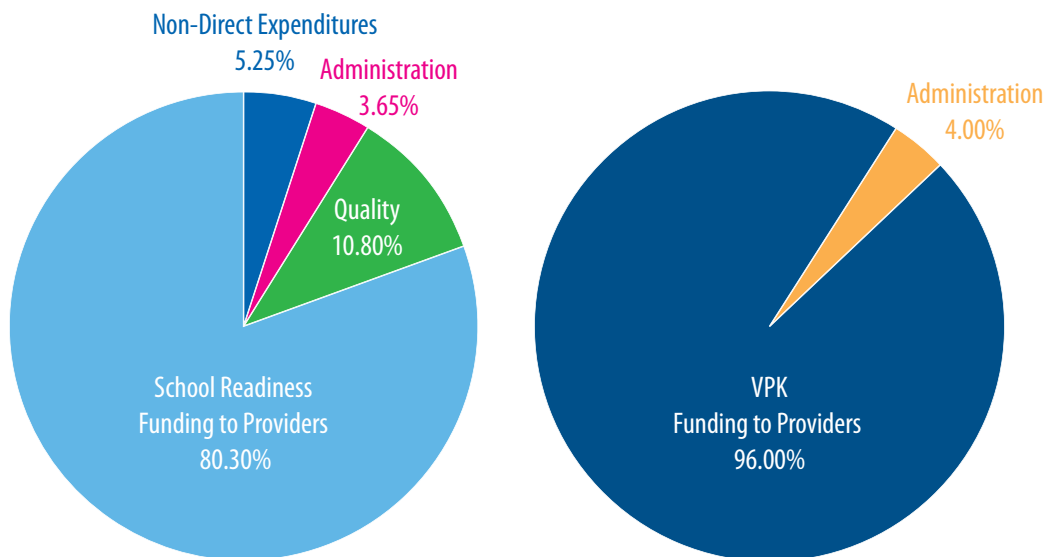
The Words on the Bus program highlights new vocabulary words, animated read-aloud, and activities that coordinate with the book or targeted vocabulary. The program brought book-embedded vocabulary to VPK sites, using the monthly spotlight book from the Soar in 4 program. Similarly, the ELC's STEAM program 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 52,000 free books to the children of Manatee County.

Grant Expenditures

2022-2023 Total Funding

The Early Learning Coalition of Manatee County received federal and state funding totaling \$50,349,196 in the fiscal year. 80.3% of School Readiness funds and 96% of Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) funds were spent directly on child care services. Our administrative costs for these programs were 3.65% and 4.00% respectively. Included in the state and federal funding was \$654,185 in CRRSA (Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Act) funding and \$20,996,149 in ARPA (American Rescue Plan Act) funding. ELC was also awarded an additional \$2,565,000 from Manatee County Children's Services Advisory Board.



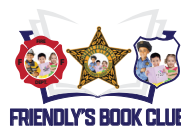
THANK YOU TO OUR 2022/2023 BOARD MEMBERS



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To Donate call (941) 757-2902 or Visit us online at www.elc-manatee.org

*Sponsorship by the Early Learning Coalition of Manatee County and the State of Florida, Division of Early Learning
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