“If we fail at school readiness, you and I will pay the price in the prisons we build, the police we hire, the judges we need, the taxes we pay and, most of all, with the very future of these children – and ultimately, our own future.”

David Lawrence, Jr.
President, Early Childhood Initiative Foundation of Miami
The History of the Florida Early Learning System

In 1999, the Florida Legislature passed s. 411.01 F.S., the “School Readiness Act”. This bill created the Florida Partnership for School Readiness (FPSR) and called for the creation of local school readiness coalitions with the overall goal of ensuring that all children are eager to learn and ready to succeed when they enter kindergarten.

In November 2002, voters passed a constitutional amendment creating the Voluntary Prekindergarten Education (VPK) Program, and in January 2005, the Governor signed House Bill1-A to guide implementation.

Changes to the Florida Early Learning System

Statutory Changes:

- School Readiness Coalitions, renamed as Early Learning Coalitions, to administer both Pre-K (VPK) and School Readiness.
- Transfers the direction of School Readiness Programs to the Office of Early Learning.
- Reduced the number of coalitions statewide to 30.
- Coalitions must serve a minimum of 2,000 children.
- Governance and membership changes.
History and Purpose

The Early Learning Coalition of Manatee County is one of 30 Coalitions located throughout the state of Florida. These Coalitions were originally created in May of 1999 as a component of Florida Statute 411- the School Readiness Act.

Meeting the First Education Goal: School Readiness

The intent of the School Readiness Act was to create a locally designed, operated, and managed system of fully integrated and coordinated school readiness programs with a state-level partnership providing overall leadership for coordinating programmatic, administrative, and fiscal policies and standards. Local coalitions are responsible for examining local programs and delivery systems, establishing concrete steps to improve service integration, efficiency, and quality, and developing an evaluation plan to measure progress in meeting the goals it establishes. In order to accomplish these requirements, coalitions must understand the strengths and needs in their communities and develop multiple community partnerships and action steps for service continuation, service improvements, and to address gaps in service. Service delivery, as defined by the Act, includes early education and care, screening and assessment, and parenting supports. Local coalitions are required to develop strategies to bring school readiness partners together, develop concrete steps to integrate services, identify mechanisms to increase efficiencies, and implement quality improvement activities.

School Readiness Goals

The School Readiness Act requires a community plan to address the needs of all eligible children. In order for children to be ready for school, the following goals (as identified in F.S. 411.01) must be addressed in the community plan:

- Goal 1: School readiness programs shall prepare children for success in school.
- Goal 2: School readiness programs shall involve parents as their child's first teacher and support family skill building.
- Goal 3: School readiness programs shall be an integrated and seamless system of services and shall be implemented through local coalitions.
- Goal 4: School readiness programs shall be coordinated and public funding integrated to achieve effectiveness and efficiency.

Upon enactment of HB1A in January 2005, the Coalition also became responsible for the implementation and administration of the Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten Program, which serves 4 year old children. The Coalition administers the VPK Program for children who are receiving that service only, as well as integrating VPK into the School Readiness component, when applicable.
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 children.

Our Programs & Services:
- Child Care Resource and Referral
- Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK)
- School Readiness
- Early Literacy Initiatives
- Quality Initiatives
- Professional Development
- Health Activities
- Family Engagement and Parenting Initiatives
- Inclusive Child Care
- Community Outreach

Our Mission
The mission of the Early Learning Coalition of Manatee County is 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 child’s first and most important teacher, and to continue to improve the quality of services available in the community.

Our Vision
The vision of the Early Learning Coalition of Manatee County is 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.
Direct is basically childcare direct service such as TANF, Protective Services, Working Poor. Funding for School Readiness comes from the Child Care Development Fund, TANF State General Revenue and is paid to the Coalition. 19% of those dollars are used for program administration (non-direct). A minimum of 70% of those dollars used to pay for the services the child receives (direct education). The remainder of the dollars are used for quality or to increase childcare services (direct education). Non-direct funding for SR are funds used for administration of the School Readiness programs. Administrative costs are set at 5%; BBE (eligibility) and BBD (direct services to providers and parents) are 14% for a total of 19%. Funding for VPK comes from State General Revenue only and allows for 5% administrative cost.
The Office of Early Learning

- Day-to-Day Operations
- Accountability of Program Delivery
- Payment and Attendance System
- Training and Technical Assistance to Local Coalitions
- Early Learning Advisory Committee
- Early Learning Coalitions

Office of Early Learning

- Funding Agreements
- Memos of Understanding
- Grant Awards
- Program/Financial Monitoring

- Chartering
- Plan Approval
- Budget Approval
- Performance Oversight

Early Learning Coalitions
**Board Responsibilities**

- Governing the organization setting by broad policies and objectives
- Developing strategic framework and assigning priorities
- Acquire and maintain sufficient resources for the organization’s operation and to adequately finance services to the community
- Advocate for the children and families of Manatee County

**Coalition Board Composition**

- Chair – Private Sector Governor Appointed
- Private Sector Governor Appointed Representative
- Private Sector Governor Appointed Representative
- Department of Children & Families Representative
- Department of Children and Families Representative
- School District Representative
- Regional Workforce Board Representative
- County Health Department Representative
- State College Representative
- County Commissioner Representative
- Head Start Representative
- Private Child Care Provider Representative
- Faith Based Child Care Provider Representative
- Programs for Children with Disabilities Representative
Executive Committee
• Made up of the Board Officers - acts on behalf of the Board between Board meetings.
• Evaluates the Executive Director on behalf of the board.
• Sets Board agendas after input form staff & committee chairs.

Finance Committee
• Oversees development of the budget.
• Ensures accurate tracking, monitoring and accountability of funds.
• Ensures adequate financial control.

Governance Committee
• Reviews policies and procedures
• Recruits board members
• Reviews and recommends board applications
• Officer nominations
• Organizes board member orientations
• Recommends bylaw revisions and amendments
• Position descriptions

Quality Initiatives Committee
• Curriculum approval
• Monitoring assessment planning
• Education and training program
• Family literacy
• Infant and toddler programs
• Parent involvement
• Service Delivery
• Local VPK program decisions
• Development of the local Quality Rating System (QRIS)
**Individual Board Member Responsibilities**

- Regular attendance at Board meetings
- Become informed about Early Learning Policy and Issues
- Review Board Materials
- Participation on a Committee
- Abide by Sunshine Laws Restrictions
- Advocate for Children

**Board Protocol & Procedures**

- The Coalition operates under a set of approved By-Laws
- The Coalition is governed by both state and federal statute
- The Coalition adheres to the requirements of the requirements of the Sunshine Law:
  - All meetings where two or more board members are present must be publicly noticed.
  - Board members may not speak to each other regarding past, present or potential board business outside of an advertised meeting.
  - All documentation is public record.
  - Minutes must be taken for each meeting.
  - The Coalition Board follows standard practices based on Robert’s Rules of Order.

**Board Ethics & Conflict of Interest**

- No member of the Coalition Board may participate or vote upon nay measure which would inure to their special gain or loss or that of the principal whom they represent.
- If a member has abstained from voting due to a conflict of interest they must complete and submit the form to the Coalition Executive Assistant within 15 days of the vote.
- Conflict of Interest is very important. Sometimes you are the only one who might know whether a potential board action item, or topic of discussion will be a conflict of interest. It is the responsibility of the board member to state that the conflict exist and file a form 8B to the Coalition.
Coalition Responsibilities

- Develop a work plan for implementing the School Readiness & VPK Programs
- Responsible for financial management
- Development of a comprehensive, integrated system of early care and education for Manatee County
- Expand access to community resources
- Provide for extended-day and extended-year services
- Establish a single point of entry and unified waiting list
- Develop a community plan to address the needs of all eligible children
- Establish local school readiness payment rates
- Provide for age-appropriate developmental assessment
- Provide for Pre and Post test for children entering and leaving school readiness programs
- Provide for character building curriculum
School Readiness Program
The Early Learning Coalition must implement a comprehensive program of school readiness services that enhance the cognitive, social, and physical development of children to achieve the performance standards and outcome measures adopted by the Office of Early Learning.

School Readiness Programs must be:
• Developmentally appropriate
• Research-based
• Involve parents as their child’s first teacher
• Enhance the educational readiness of eligible children

School Readiness Programs:
• Serve children ages 0 through 12. (Children age 10-12 are only served if required by law)
• Is available full-day and year-round.
• Services are offered at public schools, private child care centers, faith-based programs and family child care homes (both formal and informal).
• Children served are determined eligible due to:
  ➢ Protective Services
  ➢ Parents are on temporary cash assistance
  ➢ Or the family is “working poor” (below the 150% poverty level)
**What does School Readiness mean for parents?**

- Helps a parent choose quality care and pays for child care so they can work or go to school.
- Helps a parent understand what is developmentally appropriate for their child.
- Helps a parent find services in the community to access interventions for their child.

**School Readiness Services provided by the Coalition**

- Child Care Resource & Referral
- Intake and Eligibility
- Child and Family Services
- Developmental Screenings and Child Assessments
- Provider Training & Teaching Assistance
- Provider reimbursements
- Inclusion & Early Intervention services
**Voluntary Prekindergarten Program (VPK)**

VPK is a free program aimed to prepare four-year-old children for kindergarten and build the foundation for their educational success. VPK is available to all four-year-olds born on or before September 1 who reside in Florida, regardless of family income. Parents come to the Early Learning Coalition office to establish child eligibility and select the School Year Program or Summer Program option. Parents receive a Certificate of Eligibility and may enroll their child at the VPK provider of their choice.

VPK programs are offered by public, private and faith-based providers who meet state eligibility requirements. Providers determine their own program hours and days.

**School Year Program**
- Offers 540 instructional hours.
- Each class must have at least 4 VPK children, but no more than 18 children total.
- Utilize a curriculum that meets the educational goals adopted by DOE.
- Have a qualified VPK instructor and meet the approved adult/child ratios.

**Summer Program**
- Offers 300 instructional hours.
- Each class must have at least 4 VPK children, but no more than 12 children total.
- Utilize a curriculum that meets the educational goals adopted by DOE.
- Have a qualified VPK instructor and meet the approved adult/child ratios.
Community Partnerships
How you can help...

• Adopt a Center or Family Child Care Home. Visit a neighborhood early learning program to volunteer, read a story, or share a skill.

• Provide books or age-appropriate materials for the classrooms or contribute to the Early Learning Coalition’s Mini-Grant Program.

• Provide text books for teachers advancing their early childhood degree or contribute to the Early Learning Coalition’s Professional Development Scholarship Fund.

• Participate in the Child Care Executive Partnership Program and receive a dollar for dollar match from the State of Florida.

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.”
Margaret Meade

Please visit our website at www.elc-manatee.org