

Message from the President & CEO

Evelio C. Torres

March 26, 2009

Children's Week is a special opportunity to fully recognize our commitment to promoting and enhancing the education, health, and wellbeing of our children. On Friday afternoon, March 20, we gathered together at Miami Children's Museum to renew and strengthen that promise. Similar Children's Week advocacy events are also scheduled to take place throughout Florida as well as in our state's capital. We appreciate everyone's efforts to participate in this important week and the wonderful artwork and performances by our young children.

The Early Learning Coalition is committed to preparing every child in our community for school. One way in which we accomplish this is through the assessment of children enrolled in our school readiness (SR) program. In Miami-Dade County, the Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ) was selected by our Assessment Task Force to screen children. When teachers engage in the assessment program they enhance their knowledge of children's developmental milestones, increase the early identification of children at risk for developmental delays, and provide early intervention strategies for children who may need additional support. The Learning Accomplishment Profile-Diagnostic (LAP-D) and Early Learning Accomplishment Profile (E-LAP) are also provided to a random cross-selection of children throughout the county, measuring their progress over time. This portion of the assessment process is administered by the staff from Miami-Dade County, Department of Human Services, Child Development Services (CDS).

At our Monday, April 6th board meeting, staff from CDS and Florida International University (FIU) will provide a full presentation of the process, results and indicators. I encourage your attendance for questions and answers as we continue our efforts to enhance the programs and services that strengthen the skills and education of our children. The meeting will be held at 2555 Ponce de Leon Blvd., Suite 500, Coral Gables, and starts at 8:00 a.m.

I am also very pleased to announce the release of an important case study: The Billion-Dollar Bet On A Community's Future. This study is about how The Children's Trust persuaded the 2.4 million residents of Florida's largest county to tax themselves during an economic downturn. The study was commissioned by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, an important partner who has made a significant investment in Florida through The Early Childhood Initiative Foundation (ECIF). Other ECIF partners include the University of Florida's Lastinger Center for Learning, Miami-Dade Public Schools, The Children's Trust, the Early Learning Coalition and United Way's Center for Excellence in Early Education. With the full support of the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, these partners have worked collaboratively to improve the wellbeing and learning of children through Quality Counts, the SPARK Initiative (Supporting Partnerships to Assure Ready Kids), Ready Schools Florida and the Early Childhood Learning Labs Initiative.

In fact, from March 24th - 26th, Kellogg held their Learning Labs conference in Miami. The conference is designed to connect the work in Hawaii, Washington, Mississippi and Florida as part of a movement to improve the health, education, and wellbeing of children. Among the many important moments, there was one that particularly stood out. That moment came when Dave Lawrence spoke about our mission in Miami to build a movement that shows others what can be done and how it may be done. For the full text of Dave Lawrence's speech, please visit our website at http://www.elcmdm.org/newsroom/news_coverage/DLwkwfKeynote.pdf. I hope that you will find his speech as inspiring as I did.

As always, I remain at your service.
Sincerely,

Evelio C. Torres
President & CEO
Early Learning Coalition of Miami-Dade/Monroe

