

Message from the President & CEO

Evelio C. Torres

March 2009

Our steadfast commitment to work in partnership with our community to develop high-quality early childhood education programs is at the heart of everything we do. We believe that if we provide you, our providers, with every resource to enhance your services, programs, and teachers' skills, our children will in turn be prepared for a lifetime of learning and success. The Curriculum Learning Communities (CLC) project was designed with this in mind, and will assist with the implementation of developmentally appropriate curricula in early learning programs. Initially, it will support programs using Creative Curriculum or the High/Scope approach, with plans to include other approved curricula in the future. CLC is based on best practices and lessons learned from the Ready Schools Miami project and other local and national early childhood curriculum implementation initiatives.

Please note that this year's legislative session began on March 3rd. I will continue to work diligently on our community's behalf alongside our very dedicated and hard working board of directors. This year's focus is to ensure that members of the legislature have a good understanding of the need to continue to work in partnership to improve the quality of our early care and education programs, and to provide incentives and higher reimbursement rates to providers. At the local level we will once again request consideration for a much needed School Readiness Program provider rate increase at the beginning of the next fiscal year, so make sure that your market rate information is up to date.

Another excellent opportunity by which to instill a lifelong love of learning in our children is the Reading Is Fundamental (RIF) project. RIF, the nation's largest and oldest children's literacy organization, provided a matching grant to the Early Learning Coalition in the amount of \$123,750 to operate a book distribution program. The Coalition is also contributing \$41,250. New, free books will be purchased and distributed to approximately 25,000 children in both Miami-Dade and Monroe Counties. Children will have the opportunity to select a book at three distribution events (for a total of 3 books), which will include fun, literacy-related activities. Our goals for this program are to encourage children's enthusiasm for reading and to motivate children, families and community members to read together.

Lastly, thanks to continued collaboration between the Provider Services Committee, chaired by Commissioner Natacha Seijas, our providers, and the Department of Health (DOH), a moratorium has been placed on the increase to DOH inspection fees. Commissioner Seijas has taken the issue to the health department's leadership for their review and reconsideration.

Our partnerships, and innovative programs and services, play critical roles in helping us achieve our mission. I encourage you to visit our website at www.elcmdm.org, to learn more about the various resources we offer so that together we strengthen our advocacy on behalf of children.

I remain at your service.

Sincerely,
Evelio C. Torres
President & CEO

