

Message from ELC



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Governor Crist Promotes Florida's Talent Supply Chain, from Pre-Kindergarten through Higher Education

~ Applauds Early Learning Advisory Council and hosts higher education roundtable with student body presidents~

TALLAHASSEE - Governor Charlie Crist today, as part of his continued focus on strengthening Florida's economy, promoted increased funding for early learning and state university system programs to help develop a world-class workforce in Florida. The Governor attended the state's Early Learning Advisory Council's quarterly meeting and hosted a roundtable discussion with student body presidents from the state university system. During the meetings, he highlighted a \$42.8 million increase to meet additional demand for Florida's popular Voluntary Prekindergarten program, and a \$100-million budget recommendation for state universities to build research and education capacity in science, technology, engineering, math, and medicine.

"Investing in early learning is critical to supporting Florida's workforce today and building the globally competitive workforce of tomorrow's innovation economy," said Governor Crist. "Access to a quality education, from early learning through higher education, helps build a strong foundation for our student's continued success in school, college and in life."

During his meeting with members of the state's Early Learning Advisory Council, Governor Crist applauded their commitment to providing educational opportunities for Florida's youngest children. He also outlined his 2010-11 budget priorities for early education, including critical investments in the School Readiness program and the Voluntary Prekindergarten program. Research shows children who attend high-quality early education programs typically have a better high school graduation rate, have a higher employment rate and earn higher wages than their counterparts who do not have similar opportunities. The Florida Agency for Workforce Innovation is currently serving more than 350,000 children and their families through School Readiness and Voluntary Prekindergarten programs.

"By recognizing parents as their children's first teachers and assisting them in securing a high-quality early education for their children, we are contributing to a productive, responsive workforce now and in the future," said Agency for Workforce Innovation Director Cynthia R. Lorenzo. "We are also supporting Florida's early learning providers, who employ more than 70,000 Floridians and generate more than \$1 billion in wages annually."

Governor Crist joined Frank Brogan, chancellor of the state university system, during the roundtable discussion with student body presidents from the state university system. The Governor emphasized the importance of a quality education that begins before kindergarten and continues through the highest levels of education. Governor Crist also reiterated his commitment to Florida's Talent Supply Chain - the Agency for Workforce Innovation, Department of Education, Board of Governors and Workforce Florida - to embrace a new era of collaboration by formally partnering with Florida's business leaders to develop a strategic plan to ensure Florida's workforce is equipped to meet the demands of a global, knowledge-based economy of the 21st century. The shared strategy will ensure students can access educational opportunities and gain skills that will increase Florida's economic competitiveness.

Governor Crist's 2010-11 early learning budget recommendations include:

- *Preserving School Readiness funding at \$615.4 million* - to support Florida's families and employers by providing vital financial assistance to help eligible parents secure quality child care, allowing them to seek or maintain employment.
- *Increasing Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) program funding to \$411.5 million* - to meet additional demand for Florida's VPK program, which has enabled more than 654,000 children to enter kindergarten better prepared since the program began in 2005. Two million dollars will be used to develop the Early Learning Information System to streamline services and to maximize the investment in children.

Governor Crist's higher education budget priorities include \$3.6 billion for the state university system. His budget includes \$100-million budget recommendation for state universities to build research and education capacity in science, technology, engineering, math, and medicine. He has also recommended \$5 million for state university research commercialization matching grants. While the Governor proposed no tuition increase for resident undergraduates at Florida's state universities, state universities have the continued authority to increase the tuition differential fee by up to 15 percent.

About the Early Learning Advisory Council

Florida's Early Learning Advisory Council is composed of business leaders, appointed by the governor, who serve as chairs of 31 local Early Learning Coalitions. Early Learning Coalitions administer the state's statutorily-mandated early learning programs by identifying local needs and creating a comprehensive system that supports the children and families within their communities. The Early Learning Advisory Council is also responsible for advising on statewide early learning system development.

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