



## Back to School Edition

Issue No. 15

## Provider News Alert

### Our Mission and Vision

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#### Our Mission

To promote high-quality school readiness, voluntary pre-kindergarten and after school programs, thus increasing all children's chances of achieving future educational success and becoming productive members of society. The Coalition seeks to further the physical, social, emotional and intellectual needs of Miami-Dade and Monroe County children with a priority toward the ages before birth through age 5.

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#### Our Vision

To ensure a comprehensive and integrated system providing for all families and their children, beginning before birth to 5 years, the affordable opportunity to enter school ready to learn and succeed in life.

### President's Message



With Tropical Storm Fay now behind us, we can officially kick-off the start of the 2008-2009 school year. Miami-Dade and Monroe Counties were fortunate to have remained unscathed, but some of our colleagues in other parts of the state have not been as fortunate, with some experiencing serious water damage. We will do whatever we can to assist them in their recovery efforts.

Throughout the summer, Coalition staff have been preparing for the start of the school year. Our VPK program staff, along with the help of Miami-Dade County Department of Human Services, has been working diligently to get early care and education providers certified and ready to accept children into their programs. We held a highly successful Materials Fair to provide educators with materials, curriculum, and training programs for their classrooms. We are continuing to recruit early care and education providers into the Quality Counts program, a Quality Rating Improvement System that measures the effectiveness and quality of a provider's educational setting. We also created a Coalition Dashboard so that members of our community can view our program and performance data.

We are also very pleased to announce that all School Readiness providers will be receiving a special one year subscription to National Geographic's Little Kids Magazine. The magazines are slated to be delivered in late October, and are a wonderful literacy

piece to share with children in the classrooms.

I wish you the best for the new school year and remain at your service.

Sincerely,

Evelio C. Torres  
President and CEO

## **IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENTS**

### **ATTENTION PROVIDERS:**

**The following information outlines how reimbursements for School Readiness and VPK need to be requested if your school was closed due to a disaster/ hurricane.**

#### **School Readiness**

Providers are reimbursed for disaster/ hurricane days. Code "D" must be recorded on both the Provider Attendance Roster and the Parental Signature Sheet. Code "D" should be used for all days the center is closed as a result of a disaster/ hurricane.

#### **VPK**

Providers are reimbursed for up to 10 disaster/ hurricane days each year. Code "D" must be recorded on both the Provider Attendance Roster and the Parental Signature Sheet. Code "D" should be used for all days the center is closed as a result of a disaster/ hurricane. If the school is closed beyond 10 days throughout the year, then the provider must make an adjustment to their calendars to extend the program.

### **Be Election Ready**

Remember to make your vote count! On August 26th, Miami-Dade County will hold primary elections. You can already go to the polls for early voting. For more information go to [www.miamidade.gov/elections/home.asp](http://www.miamidade.gov/elections/home.asp).

### **Going Green**

The Coalition is making strides towards going green in our office environment. One of the first processes we are changing is the distribution method of our News Alert and other mass communications. These will now be sent in a purely digital form, unless there are extenuating circumstances that require a paper copy to be mailed. This will help lessen the need for paper, and reduce the amount of waste in our environment.



The shift to a paperless system will occur within the next month. To encourage those providers who are not yet on our e-mail list to sign up for the electronic delivery service, we have created a contest. The first 20 Providers that are able to set up an official organization e-mail where they can receive Coalition correspondence will receive a Gift Card to AMC Movie Theaters. To be eligible, Providers must provide an e-mail address that is not currently included in our contact database. This contest will end on September 30, 2008. Please send your e-mails to [gcarreras@elcmdm.org](mailto:gcarreras@elcmdm.org).

### **Make sure to sign up for the Child Care Executive Partnership Program (CCEP)**

Early Care and Education providers are encouraged to participate in the Child Care Executive Partnership (CCEP) program. If you serve children of your employees - not just

your teachers, but any employee that works in your center - they may be eligible to participate in this great employee benefit program. The purpose of the program is to help you offer child care to your employees who qualify for the school readiness program.

### **Who is eligible and how does it work?**

- \*Low to moderate wage families, at or below 200% of the federal poverty level may qualify.
- \*There is no wait list for qualifying families.
- \*Providers are reimbursed at 50% of their respective school readiness rate, minus the parent fee, and may be eligible for a tax benefit of up to 50% as an employee benefit for "in-kind" services.

### **How do you apply?**

\*Visit [www.elcmdm.org](http://www.elcmdm.org) and locate the Announcements banner. Click on May 2008, Child Care Executive Partnership and download the information package.

Complete the Center Participation Agreement and fax that page to Alina Soto at 786-888-9282.

\*Complete pages 1 and 2 of the (Step 1) CCEP Pre-Screening Form and fax only those two pages to Sharon Gordon at 305-514-6152 for Miami-Dade, and to Kathy Snyder at (305) 292-7156 for Monroe. DO NOT send supporting documentation, your employee can take that paperwork with them to their eligibility interview.

\*You should hear from Ms. Gordon or Ms. Snyder within approximately a week of her receiving your pre-screening form.

\*Give a copy of the Pre-Screening Form to your employee to take to their interview along with a copy of the Step 2 Employee Checklist. It may be helpful to review the checklist with your employee to insure that they have all of the documents needed prior to their eligibility interview.

Once determined eligible, the child(ren) name will appear on your regular School Readiness roster.

**For additional information please call Alina Soto at 305-646-7249.**

## **ELC Knowledge Center**

Welcome to the ELC Knowledge Center. The Knowledge Center is a place where you can learn about upcoming trainings, special reports on early childhood education and care, and other issues, like inclusion and special needs services, that are related to early childhood education and care. We welcome you to contact us, or any of the partner organizations for more information.

### **Back-to-School Tips for Parents**

From the National Education Association, [www.nea.org](http://www.nea.org)

#### **For younger Children**

To be prepared for back-to-school, it is important that younger children are familiar with:

1. Basic information such as their name, address, and phone number.
2. Basic toilet needs.
3. Being considerate to others and knowing how to wait their turn.

In addition, before the first day of school parents of younger children should consider:

1. Establishing a bedtime ritual.
2. Immersing their children in social situations with other children their age.
3. Familiarizing them with classroom basics including letters, numbers, colors, and shapes.
4. Reading daily to their children.
5. Determining the route they will take to and from school and then practicing the route.

6. Taking their children to visit their school and classroom, if possible, to get them acquainted with the new setting.

#### **For Older School Children**

Experts recommend a healthy, open dialogue with older children about back-to-school. Parents should:

1. Engage in discussion about their children's friends, classes, and activities.
2. Work with their children to set measurable goals and expectations.
3. Urge their children to be involved in extracurricular activities at school and in the community.
4. Help them with budgeting their time and homework load.

#### **For Parents**

Parents play a key role in helping make the back-to-school transition smooth. Here are just a few tips to help parents get started:

1. Determine set times and location for homework.
2. Meet their children's teacher and school principal.
3. Prepare for and go to parent-teacher conferences.
4. Get involved in the school's PTA.
5. Stay on top of the school calendar.
6. Keep track of and attend school events.

#### **Inclusion and Special Needs**

Each month, in an ongoing effort to highlight important issues for educators who work with children with special needs or learning difficulties, the ELC Knowledge Center's Inclusion and Special Needs section will provide strategies to assist teachers, families and the children themselves. Our first article provides best practices for handling disruptive behaviors in the classroom.

Beginning in October, our focus will be Infant / Toddler Awareness and an 8-part mini-series will provide research-based information on social, emotional and intellectual development. Each article will include Tips for Teachers (and families) and strategies to promote and enhance learning for all children regardless of learning capabilities.

"Learning is a natural part of being a human being". J. P. Shonkoff

#### **Handling Disruptive Children in the Classroom**

By Allison Golden, BA

A disruptive child can be found in almost every classroom in every school. They can ruin a really great teaching activity for the whole class and test the teacher's patience. Many of these same behaviors are also exhibited in the home and community. The fact is, most children demonstrate disruptive behaviors either because the child wants something or is trying to escape from something. Ex. A child that does not write their name very well, may get up out of their seat or bother another child during writing time. They are trying to escape. Some tips for the teacher and family:

1. Don't take the behavior personally.
2. Take a deep breath and step back from the situation.
3. Take a minute and think about what you need to do to handle the situation.
4. For repetitive behaviors, have a plan. Don't wait to react to the child. Your reaction will most likely be negative and only cause more tension. You will be prepared, feel better, the behavior will stop and you and the child can build a relationship that will enhance the classroom experience for both of you.

When a child is disruptive in a classroom, the attention often goes solely to that particular child with a focus on what is wrong with them or how to "fix" them. Let's shift the focus from the child only, to the child/teacher relationship, particularly the reaction of the teacher to the child's behavior. With more intervention and nurturing and less scolding, the behaviors will occur less. The following are some strategies for teachers who have children with disruptive behaviors in their classroom:

1. Give a replacement behavior, something the child can do INSTEAD of the disruptive behavior, for example, holding a teddy bear instead of hitting someone
2. Redirect the child toward a positive activity
3. Encourage the child to use words instead of acting out
4. Give ONE warning, give a consequence and then FOLLOW THROUGH
5. Observe to know what triggers the disruptive behavior, then redirect and stop it before it occurs
6. Tell the child WHY the behavior is not acceptable
7. Engage the family and talk with the teacher about what is happening both in the classroom and at home, and how behaviors are being dealt with in both places
8. Partner the disruptive child with a child who exhibits proper classroom behavior
9. Give choices to the child when possible
10. Reinforce positive behavior when it occurs

Engaging children in activities that interest them is the very best way to eliminate the disruptions. Engaged children are productive and too busy learning to be disruptive.

*"No one has yet fully realized the wealth of sympathy, kindness, and generosity hidden in the soul of a child. The effort of every true education should be to unlock that treasure" - Emma Golma*

## Featured Partner



We would like to sincerely thank The Children's Forum for their ongoing partnership and the services they provide for the children and educators of our community.

The Children's Forum helped in the launch of the Quality Counts Program, providing Career Advisors to the participating providers. The Coalition and the Children's Forum serve as the service providers for the Wages Program; providing stipends, based on credentials, for early care and education staff who are pursuing continuing education.

On behalf of the young children of our community, our staff, and our board of directors, we thank The Children's Forum. For additional information on the Children's Forum, please visit [www.fcforum.org](http://www.fcforum.org).

## Events

On August 14th, the Coalition and Miami-Dade County Department of Human Services participated in a special community event held at the InterAmerican Plaza. Other community organizations present were: Switchboard of Miami, The Children's Trust 211 Helpline, Big Brothers and Big Sisters of Greater Miami, Health Connect, South Florida Workforce, and several others. It was a great opportunity to reach our community, and our team at the event was busy throughout the day educating parents and the other organizations about the VPK program, Resource and Referral Services, and the overall mission of the Coalition.



## Board of Directors and Committees

Over the next few months, we will feature our board members to familiarize our community with the dedicated professionals who serve on our board of directors. This month, it is our pleasure to feature the Honorable Commissioner Natacha Seijas and Dr. Silvia La Villa.



Natacha Seijas was elected to the Miami-Dade Board of County Commissioners in 1993 becoming the first Hispanic woman to sit on the County Commission. She represents District 13 which includes Hialeah, Miami Lakes, Palm Springs North, Country Club and areas of unincorporated Miami-Dade. She was most recently re-elected on August 31, 2004. Commissioner Seijas was recently named to the President's Board of Advisors for St. Thomas University.

In 2003, the Commissioner was appointed to the Children's Trust by the Board of County Commissioners, where she served until January 2005. She is also a past Chair of the South Florida Regional Planning Council and past Convening Chair of the Women's Hemispheric Conference.

One of her greatest achievements came in 1997 when she created the stroller-parking ordinance. This law requires that parking lots with more than 100 spaces provide front row parking for parents with children under 3-years-old. Parents may purchase parking permits to use these spaces for a small fee which goes directly to a fund that helps agencies serving neglected children.

The Commissioner's work earned her the recognition of the Good Housekeeping Magazine as she was awarded the Good Housekeeping Award for Women in Government in 1998. Commissioner Seijas was one of 10 women to receive this prestigious recognition and her profile appeared in the July 1998 issue of the magazine.

Commissioner Seijas was born in Havana, Cuba and came to the United States in the late 1950's. She has three children and three grandchildren and one great grandchild. Professionally, she is vice president of the YMCA of Greater Miami.

Since 1999, she has been the Board of County Commissioners' representative on the Early Learning Coalition Board, and spends countless hours working as the chair of our Provider Services Committee. The committee meets at different locations throughout Miami-Dade County and provides a voice for our early care and education providers at our board meetings. Most recently, despite her very busy schedule, Commissioner Seijas agreed to travel to Monroe County with Coalition staff to meet with community leaders and elected officials regarding the challenges and opportunities that we face in Monroe County. On behalf of the children of Miami-Dade and Monroe Counties, we thank Commissioner Natacha Seijas for her work and dedication to our communities.

For the past thirty two years Dr. La Villa has overseen KIDCO Child Care Inc., a not-for-profit, multi-funded, community based organization in Miami-Dade County.

This mission started with a child care program for 54 children; the product of grassroots efforts of the Puerto Rican Community who made their presence known in the Wynwood Community in the early 1970's. Urban, at-risk communities like Wynwood with dominant minority populations drastically needed to be brought into the social service loop with the provision of basic services in support to their residents, primarily the young children and families.



Today KIDCO has four sites, serves 450 children and families under multiple funding sources including: Head Start/Early Head Start; Voluntary Pre Kindergarten (VPK); School Readiness, other funding from Child Development Services (CDS); City of Miami CDBG, Alliance for Human Services CBO funding and other grants that help sustain KIDCO's quality in services.

The struggles to accomplish quality services at four sites in an industry where monies are scarce are part of the drive to bring early childhood education and care to the forefront of priorities in our community. Dr. La Villa is part of several organizations at the local and national levels that support the professionalization of the child care industry and place emphasis on issues such as worthy wages, best practices, and staff development.

Dr. La Villa has been a member of the board of the Early Learning Coalition since 1999, and serves as the early care and education provider representative on our board. She also co-chairs our Provider Services Committee and has most recently agreed to chair our infant and toddler workgroup. The children of Miami-Dade and Monroe Counties are fortunate to have Dr. La Villa as a member of the board of directors of the Early Learning Coalition. Her professionalism and dedication are highly admired and respected by all.

### **Upcoming Board and Committee Meetings:**

If you are interested in attending any of these meetings or becoming involved, please refer to the Events section of our website at [www.elcmdm.org](http://www.elcmdm.org) for upcoming meetings.

<b><u>Name</u></b>	<b><u>Date</u></b>	<b><u>Time</u></b>	<b><u>Location</u></b>
Finance Committee	25-Aug	8:00AM	ELCMDM Board Room
Program & Strategy Committee	3-Sept	1:00PM	ELCMDM Board Room
Board of Directors	8-Sept	8:00AM	ELCMDM Board Room

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