



## ELC News Alert

Issue 3  
April 2010

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#### President's Message



Dear Friends:

Miami-Dade School Superintendent Alberto Carvalho and I recently invited a group of early care and education providers to a lunch meeting to discuss some of the more pressing issues affecting our industry.

The superintendent spoke of the need to find new ways to collaborate and of the work that we all know remains to be done to ensure that every child has the best possible opportunity to succeed. Providers spoke of the many challenges they experience in this very difficult economy, including the expectation that they consistently provide high-quality services and the lack of access to educational resources made available to the public school system. The meeting concluded with some very specific action items that the superintendent agreed to help us pursue.

I know that meeting participants share my optimism about new opportunities to work even closer with our public school system. There is no doubt in my mind that the superintendent reinforces his words with actions. On more than one occasion I have heard him speak publicly about the need to make investments in early care and education and the long term benefits of early investments when we treat our education system as early education - 20, not just K - 20.

I always welcome and appreciate your thoughts and suggestions, so please do not hesitate to write or call my office.

Please do not forget to visit our website for legislative updates. You can also obtain contact information for your legislator. Please get involved in the legislative process. Every voice counts!

I remain at your service.

Sincerely,

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

## Upcoming Board & Committee Meetings

Program & Strategy  
Monday, March 22; 3:30 p.m.  
ELC Board Room

Finance  
Wednesday, March 31; 8:00 a.m.  
ELC Board Room

Board of Directors  
Monday, April 5; 8:00 a.m.  
ELC Board Room

For a complete list of upcoming Coalition meetings and events, please visit our website at [www.elcmdm.org](http://www.elcmdm.org).

## Quick Links

[Early Learning Coalition](#)

[VPK](#)

[Agency for Workforce Innovation](#)

## Get Connected with ELC!



## Important Announcements

### Congress has Released their Proposed Budgets for School Readiness and VPK

Over the last week, the House and Senate released their proposed budgets for both the School Readiness and VPK programs. To review a summary of the reductions as well as information that you may want to share as you continue to educate members on the benefits of Florida's early learning programs, please visit the following legislative update at <http://www.elcmdm.org/Legislative/downloads/legislative%20update031210.pdf>. As you look at the budget recommendations from both the House and the Senate you will notice very different funding recommendations coming from each committee. The reason for this is that each committee was given different reduction targets.

### Free Mobile Information Service, text4baby, Provides Timely Health Information to Women from Early Pregnancy Through Their Babies' First Year

Technology companies, health professionals, and federal, state, and local agencies combine forces to provide free health information to pregnant women and new mothers via text messages. To learn more about this program, text4baby, please visit [http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/microsites/support-images/Text4Baby%20Release\\_4%20Feb.pdf](http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/microsites/support-images/Text4Baby%20Release_4%20Feb.pdf) or the text4baby website at [www.text4baby.org](http://www.text4baby.org).

### Attend a Free Training and Become a Parent Peer Group™ (PPG) Master Trainer

Become a certified Parent Peer Group™ (PPG) MASTER Trainer for Informed Families. A free training will be offered by the Informed Families and Knight Foundation on Friday, March 26, 2010, from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. at the Early Learning Coalition's Coral Gables office. Lunch will be provided.

To learn more, please visit [www.elcmdm.org](http://www.elcmdm.org). For questions and to RSVP, contact Elizabeth Garcia at 305-856-4886 or [lgarcia@informedfamilies.org](mailto:lgarcia@informedfamilies.org). Please note that limited space is available.

The Parent Peer Group (PPG) Training will help your staff/center directors teach parents how to: set common guidelines for their children's behavior, monitor children's behavior and establish consequences, share information with other parents, and support each other towards building a community for children.

## Learn More About the Curriculum Learning Communities (CLC) Project

The Curriculum Learning Communities (CLC) project helps early learning programs implement developmentally appropriate curricula. It supports programs that use Creative Curriculum or HighScope Curriculum, with plans to include other approved curricula in the future. CLC is based on best practices and lessons learned from the local Ready Schools Miami project and other local and national early childhood curriculum implementation initiatives.

The goals of the Curriculum Learning Communities project are to:

- improve fidelity and accountability for curriculum implementation through job embedded professional development;
- empower programs and teachers by building onsite capacity through innovative strategies and systematic training and support; and
- assist Quality Counts centers in making progress in their quality rating.

Each Curriculum Learning Community consists of groups of 15-20 centers that are implementing the same curriculum. The group works together to implement the curriculum over time, share successes, and work to solve challenges. A total of 2 CLCs - one Creative Curriculum and one HighScope - were created in Year 1.

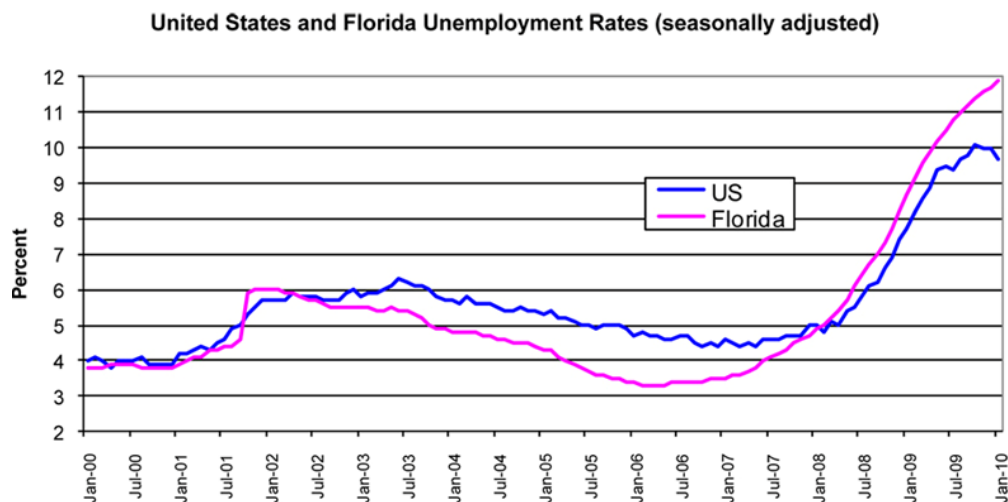
Each center selects two peer facilitators, ideally one infant/toddler and one preschool. The peer facilitators:

- Receive training on how to implement a learning community at their program so the entire program can benefit from the trainings;
- Complete 18-20 days of training on either Creative Curriculum or HighScope and 5-7 days of Peer Facilitator's training over more than a year;
- Work with peers on-site to implement the approach between each training;
- Provide feedback to each other and the trainers on what worked (and didn't);
- Participate in Learning Showcases to share what they have learned over the CLC;
- Over the course of the CLC, increase appropriate implementation of the curriculum approach, providing higher quality care and education for young children and their families.

In addition to the specialized training, centers can access curriculum materials, incentives to cover staff time, support from the learning communities to ensure successful implementation, and ongoing coordination and follow up.

## AWI Released Florida's January Employment Statistics

AWI released Florida's January employment figures as follows, "Florida's seasonally adjusted unemployment rate is 11.9 percent in January 2010, up 0.2 percentage point from the December revised rate of 11.7 percent, and up from 8.7 percent a year ago. January's rate equals the May 1975 rate, the highest in the recorded series. Florida's unemployment rate remained higher than the national average, which was 9.7 percent in January."



Source: Florida Agency for Workforce Innovation, Labor Market Statistics Center, Local Area Unemployment Statistics Program, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics.

For additional details on the State's unemployment statistics, please visit [www.elcmdm.org](http://www.elcmdm.org).

\*This information has been provided by AWI's March 10, 2010 press release, "Florida's January Employment Figures Released."

### **Cherish the Moments, Treasure the Gems: 8th Annual Pregnant Women, Infants, and Toddlers Conference - March 29 - 30, 2010**

Cherish the Moments, Treasure the Gems will be held from March 29 - 30, in Miami. Sponsored by the Miami-Dade County Community Action Agency, there will be six workshop tracks. Conference goals are as follows: To provide a holistic training event focused on quality services for pregnant women, infants, toddlers, and their families; to increase participant awareness of infant/toddler development, community resources, and current trends in the field; to affect the quality of care provided to pregnant women, infants, toddlers and their families; and to establish Early Head Start as a leader in current trends and critical issues related to infants and toddlers.

The registration deadline is Monday, March 22<sup>nd</sup>. For event schedule and additional details, please visit [www.elcmdm.org](http://www.elcmdm.org) or contact Angella Malave at (786) 469-4717 or [MALKA@miamidade.gov](mailto:MALKA@miamidade.gov).

### **Be Your Children's Advocate!**

Now is the perfect time to become more informed and actively involved on behalf of children and early care and education. To learn how you can become a more active and vocal children's advocate, visit <http://elcmdm.org/newsroom/ELC%20update/ELCM030810.pdf>. Also, make sure to regularly access the Early Learning Coalition's Legislative Updates webpage at <http://elcmdm.org/Legislative/legislative.html>. Check back often for updates!

### **"Time is of the essence, and we still need your help!"**

If you would like to participate in reducing child care costs, addressing the needs of early care and education, and supporting a strong workforce in our community, we encourage you to join the Child Care Executive Partnership (CCEP). This program is designed to ensure that children of employees through age 12 are provided affordable, high-quality, and developmentally appropriate child care.

Through federal and state funding, employers who participate in the program contribute money for child care that is matched dollar-for-dollar with funds from the CCEP. Parents pay a portion based on a sliding fee scale. Similar to the School Readiness grant, employees may qualify for CCEP by earning low to moderate wages. The eligibility requirements are the same, except employees may earn up to 200% of the federal poverty level.

As an employer you understand that caring for one's family while managing a career is challenging. You also understand that being late and taking time off from work because of child care issues can affect your bottom line. Thus the CCEP is a mutually beneficial solution for you *and* your employees.

If you are not already a member of the CCEP and would like more information, please visit the ELC's website at [http://www.elcmdm.org/our\\_services/ccep.html](http://www.elcmdm.org/our_services/ccep.html).

## ELC Board of Directors

As seen in previous news alerts, we have featured our board members to familiarize our community with the dedicated professionals who serve on the Coalition's board of directors. In this issue, it is our pleasure to highlight Gina Cortes-Suarez, Ed.D.



For nearly three decades, Dr. Gina Cortes-Suarez has held key positions at Miami Dade College. She is presently the president of the InterAmerican Campus, located in the heart of Miami's Little Havana on S.W. 27th Avenue, one block north of S.W. Eighth Street, the historic Calle Ocho. More than 17,000 students are currently enrolled at this dynamic campus.

During her distinguished career at the college, Cortes-Suarez has provided leadership as project director, associate registrar, director of the Hialeah Center, department chairperson, associate dean, dean of academic affairs, associate provost for college accreditation, a member of the faculty and associate provost for faculty initiatives, her most recent role. In addition, she is often tabbed to serve on important collegewide committees and special projects.

Prior to her employment at Miami Dade College, Cortes-Suarez was an elementary school teacher in the Miami-Dade County Public Schools system.

She earned a B.S. and M.S. in Education from the University of Miami and completed the Ed.D. in Higher Education Administration at Florida International University. Her dissertation examined attributional style and academic achievement in mathematics. Dr. Cortés-Suárez serves on the boards of the Early Learning Coalition, The Children's Trust, Citrus Health Network, Symmetry Foundation, CAMACOL, Viernes Culturales and the National Community College Hispanic Council.

## Photos from March's BOD Meeting and Recognition Ceremony

Two teachers from early education centers in Miami-Dade County, Christina Schmiedeler from KidWorks USA and Barbara Valdes from REM Learning Center were honored with 2010 Terri Lynne Lokoff/Children's TYLENOL® National Child Care Teacher Awards.

From left to right: Octavio Verdeja, Jr., ELC; Evelio Torres, ELC; Christina Schmiedeler, KidWorks USA; and Barbara Valdes, REM Learning Center.



The ELC proudly recognizes one of the early care and education centers that achieved a 5-star rating in the Quality Counts program, the Soto Family Child Care Home.

From left to right: Mo Abety, United Way; Evelio Torres, ELC; Maria Soto, Soto Family Child Care Home; and Octavio Verdeja, Jr., ELC.

## Team Member Spotlight

This month, the spotlight shines on another valued team member and the important work she accomplishes in bringing quality early childhood education to our community. In this issue, it is our pleasure to highlight **Ana Pizano**, Curriculum and Special Projects Director.

While Ana Pizano has been working at the ELC for four years holding various positions, she currently serves as the curriculum and special projects director. Among other duties, she directs the Curriculum Learning Communities project, supports the Coalition's Balanced Scorecards System, and maintains Coalition operating policies and procedures.



One of the many positive perks of Ana's present role at the ELC is her cross-collaboration with all departments and staff, as well as with different members of the early education community. She feels particularly proud of the Curriculum Learning Communities project because it focuses on improving partnerships among teachers and other people in and throughout early learning centers and agencies to improve the implementation of developmentally appropriate curricula. "I believe it is a sustainable professional development model with great impact on children," Ana says.

Ana's previous employment included working in early learning programs in New York. She also did an eight-year stint at UNICEF-Santo Domingo as an officer for child development and education. Her work at UNICEF entailed directing a rural schools project and coordinating initiatives with government and non-government organizations to build a coordinated system of early care and education. She also worked on parent-education campaigns and programs to promote quality in early education.

Prior to her tenure at UNICEF, Ana was a consultant with the Ministry of Education of the Dominican Republic where she participated in the educational reform process and several professional development initiatives with universities.

Ana enjoys reading, particularly Latin American literature. She also loves world travel, going to the beach, and spending time with family and friends. As proud mother to Christian (ten-years-old) and Amelia (eight-years-old), who both play baseball and softball, Ana and her husband have been spending a lot of time on the fields recently watching practices and games.

## Miami-Dade County News Briefs

School Readiness (SR)

### Join the United Way Center for Excellence and The Children's Trust for a Block Fest™ Event on March 18th

BLOCK Fest™ is an interactive exhibit that provides families with young children under the age of eight (8) with a rich hands-on math and science learning opportunity. The exhibit has shown to increase parent knowledge of early development in the areas of math and science education, while providing opportunities to increase social skills and literacy opportunities for young children.

The United Way Center for Excellence in Early Education in partnership with The Children's Trust is excited to host a BLOCK Fest™ event in your neighborhood! This program is sponsored in part by the Florida Parental Information and Resource Center.

Date: **Thursday, March 18, 2010**

Location: **3250 SW 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue, Main Stage Room**  
Miami, FL 33129  
(305) 631-7600

Time: 4:30 - 5:30 p.m. in Spanish  
6:00 - 7:00 p.m. in English

For more information, please visit [www.elcmdm.org](http://www.elcmdm.org), and to confirm your participation, send an email to [escuderos@unitedwaymiami.org](mailto:escuderos@unitedwaymiami.org).

### **Providers: Please Complete and Submit Your ASQ Forms Promptly!**

We are requesting your assistance in the Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ) screening-process implemented by Miami-Dade County. Please complete, review and return your ASQ forms promptly, following the instructions included in your ASQ packet.

To learn more about Miami-Dade County's workshops on how to complete the Ages and Stages Questionnaires, please contact 305-270-2905 (South) or 305-953-6007 (North) for more information.

Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK)

### **2008-2009 VPK Readiness Rates Have Been Released**

The Florida Department of Education has released the VPK Readiness Rates for 2008-2009. To review them, please visit: <https://vpk.fldoe.org/InfoPages/ReportCriteria.aspx>.

### **How to Register for VPK Trainings**

Please visit our VPK website at <http://www.vpkhelp.org/resources/trainings.html> to learn the 13 steps to successfully register for VPK trainings. Courses include VPK Educational Standards, Integrating the Standards, and Emergent Literacy for the VPK Classroom. Instructions on how to cancel your registration or obtain your certificate, transcript, and/or CEUs are also available.

### **Monroe County News Briefs**

#### **FCCPC Training Program Offered in Tavernier and Key West beginning March 16th**

Wesley House Family Services' Professional Child Care Academy will provide a ten (10)-month program, which consists of 120 hours of classroom instruction. The fee is \$850 with financial aid available through the T.E.A.C.H. (Teacher Education and Compensation Help) program for those who qualify. For more information or to register, please contact Laurie Dunn at 809-5000 ext. 231.

#### **Monroe Providers Participate in Early Education Workshops**

Monroe providers enjoy a teamwork activity based "Swimmy" by Leo Lionni at the February 20<sup>th</sup> Transitioning to Kindergarten Workshop in Marathon provided by the Alliance for Early Care & Education.



on



Monroe providers enjoy engaging in dramatic play at the February 20<sup>th</sup> Transitioning to Kindergarten Workshop in Marathon provided by the Alliance for Early Care & Education.

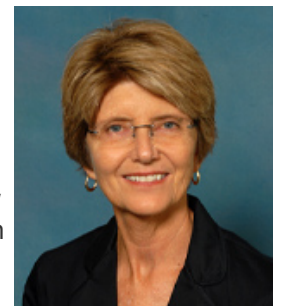
### Read Across America Day Receives Press Coverage in *The Key West Citizen*

Melissa Muniz of Monroe's Early Learning Coalition office is photographed in *The Key West Citizen* reading to children at The Learning Center in Key West in celebration of the National Education Association's Read Across America Day. To view the photo, please visit [http://elcndm.org/newsroom/news\\_coverage/keywestcitizen030410.jpg](http://elcndm.org/newsroom/news_coverage/keywestcitizen030410.jpg).

### Quality Counts

This month the spotlight shines on Jesse Leinfelder of The Children's Trust who serves as the administrator of the Quality Counts program.

Jesse Leinfelder has worked on aspects of the child care cost quality crisis for over 30 years. She has been committed to figuring out the child care financing challenge since the years when tuition for her own young child was unaffordable. Along with affordability, she knows the quality challenge is a deal-breaker for our society and is committed to improving quality to give children a better chance at optimal development.



Jesse is the point person at The Children's Trust for Quality Counts, the child care quality improvement system (QRIS) initiative. She works closely with the Early Learning Coalition, the lead agency for implementation of Quality Counts, to engage centers, family child care homes, Head Start/Early Head Start centers, and VPK classrooms of Miami-Dade County Public Schools in striving for high-quality early care and education services. While her office is at The Trust, she has been mistaken for an ELC employee because she spends so much time meeting with colleagues at the Coalition!

Jesse has been promoting quality rating and improvement work in Florida since 1999 when the early learning coalitions were established by Florida law. She led QRIS development in Broward County, and came to The Trust in spring 2006 to take on QRIS development and implementation in Miami-Dade. She convened a series of stakeholder meetings to design what was later named "Quality Counts." The best part is that numerous local agencies participated and now are sub-contracted service providers, and many early care and education providers participated and are now Quality Counts participants.

Jesse understands child care quality improvement as system-building work. She is working to integrate Quality Counts with Ready Schools Miami, a school improvement initiative, to construct an effective early care and education system for ages birth-grade 5 that connects and aligns child care and the public schools. It is challenging; Jesse points out that the "education system" has been functional in most states for about 200 years longer than the "child care system."

Jesse serves on the state Early Learning Partners steering committee of the Office of Early Learning. She has worked for many years at the local, state and national levels to improve subsidized child care, and to create an early childhood professional development system. She has participated in numerous state and national early childhood work groups focused on quality rating, professional development, accreditation, family support, and financing, through organizations including the National Association for the Education of Young Children and Zero To Three. She contributes to policy development at the Florida Children's Campaign. She has worked many years in higher education, developing and teaching classroom-based and online courses and degree programs for early childhood practitioners, and producing training manuals. A particular passion is raising the status, education and pay of the early childhood

workforce.

Jesse earned her doctorate in curriculum development and systemic change from Nova Southeastern University and degrees in early childhood and history from the University of Michigan. She has one son who lives "too far away" in Santa Barbara, CA.



Join Our  
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