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## ELC News Alert

Issue 8  
September 2010  
Special Back to School Edition

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### President's Message



Dear Friends:

On behalf of the entire Early Learning Coalition team and our board of directors, I would like to welcome all the children back to school as we begin the 2010-11 school year. Thanks to the commitment of our providers, directors, teachers and other staff, we begin this new year with better prepared early care and education professionals who have worked hard to improve their skills.

Over the last year many teachers have been getting ready for the beginning of the school year by participating in curriculum training, attending credit and non-credit courses provided by one of our partner universities, working on accreditation, or participating in one of the many professional development opportunities available through our Quality Counts Program. No-cost training opportunities sponsored by the Early Learning Coalition and our partners at the Early Childhood Initiative Foundation/Ready Schools Miami will continue to be made available as we strive to ensure that our early care and education professionals have the best skills possible to nurture and teach our community's children.

I wish you the very best during this new school year.

Sincerely,

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

## Upcoming Board & Committee Meetings

Program & Strategy  
Tuesday, August 31; 3:30 p.m.  
ELC Board Room

Finance  
Wednesday, September 1; 8:00 a.m.  
ELC Board Room

Nominating  
Wednesday, September 1; 3:00 p.m.  
ELC Board Room

Board of Directors  
Monday, September 7; 8:00 a.m.  
ELC Board Room

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

## Quick Links

[Early Learning Coalition](#)

[VPK](#)

[Agency for Workforce Innovation](#)

## Get Connected with ELC!



## Important Announcements

### ECIF Awarded a \$5M Grant in Innovative Education from the U.S. DOE

The Early Childhood Initiative Foundation (ECIF) was awarded \$5 million by the U.S. Department of Education from the Investing in Innovation, or i3, fund. Of 1,698 applicants, 49 were selected including the ECIF in partnership with Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS), the University of Florida and the W.K. Kellogg Foundation which also provided a \$1 million dollar matching grant. Focusing on innovation in education, the ECIF will utilize the i3 grant funding to develop a master's program with an early childhood specialization in which 100 early childhood teachers (grades pre-K through 3rd) will enroll; replicate the successful Teacher Fellows model; provide support to principals in their efforts to facilitate change via the Principal Fellows model; and evaluate the models and document both the quantitative and qualitative outcomes on school culture, teaching efficacy and effectiveness, and student achievement.

Special recognition is due to Gary Romano, Dr. Abby Thorman, Dr. Phil Poekert, and Ana Sejeck for their key roles in bringing the i3 funding to South Florida's early education community. To read the *Education Week* article on the i3 grant and its recipients, please visit [www.elcndm.org](http://www.elcndm.org).

### The FDA Announces a Nationwide Egg Recall

Due to an outbreak of *Salmonella* Enteritidis (SE) across the U.S., the FDA recently announced a nationwide recall of shell eggs. For additional details, please visit the FDA webpage, <http://www.fda.gov/Safety/Recalls/MajorProductRecalls/ucm223522.htm>. To review a list of all the brands of shell eggs under recall, please visit, <http://www.fda.gov/Food/NewsEvents/WhatsNewinFood/ucm222684.htm>. The list will be updated with publicly available information as soon as it is received.

### Receive Valuable Feedback from Experts on your Center's Business Plan and Practices

The Early Learning Coalition has begun the strategic planning process. This process will include developing a multi-year strategic plan that includes investment strategies. Investment strategies include slot/child care expenditures, provider reimbursement rates, quality and Gold Seal expenditures and other services funded by the ELC. In an effort to assist the Early Learning Coalition's board of directors in gaining a better understanding of the financial challenges faced by child care providers, the ELC is encouraging providers to volunteer their centers for a review of their business plans and practices by a team of volunteer private sector financial experts. These experts will evaluate your books and business model and provide valuable feedback to the board of directors as they prepare to make some very tough budgetary and programmatic decisions. Providers will not be identified by name on the report to the board. To be considered for this review or to find out more, please submit your center's name and contact information to Tabatha Cullen, Sr. Director of Communications, at [tcullen@elcmdm.org](mailto:tcullen@elcmdm.org).

### Don't Miss out on Your Chance to Participate in the CCEP Program for the 2010-2011 School Year

If you are already participating in the Child Care Executive Partnership (CCEP) program\* and wish to continue doing so for the 2010-2011 school year, **you must re-submit an agreement via mail or drop it off at the Early Learning Coalition's Coral Gables office** (2555 Ponce de Leon Blvd., Suite 500, Coral Gables, FL 33134). Please note however, you do not need to submit a pre-screening form for employees. Please visit our CCEP webpage at [http://www.elcmdm.org/our\\_services/ccep.html](http://www.elcmdm.org/our_services/ccep.html) for further information and to download the necessary paperwork.

We need to receive your 2010-2011 CCEP forms as soon as possible. Thank you.

\*The Child Care Executive Partnership (CCEP) program for early care and education providers in Miami-Dade and Monroe counties will allow centers to provide care for an employee's child at the center and be partially reimbursed for that care by the Early Learning Coalition.

### SR Providers, Enter a Raffle to Win the ELC's Young Explorer Computer!



School Readiness Providers, if you'd like to win the Coalition's IBM/Little Tykes Young Explorer computer that is currently located in our lobby, please send an email with the subject title, **Young Explorer Computer**, and your name and contact information in the body of the email to Diana Lane at [dlane@elcmdm.org](mailto:dlane@elcmdm.org). The deadline to receive your submission is September 15th.

### Providers, Beware of Bank Fraud!

A number of childcare centers have recently been the targets of bank fraud. A call is typically made from the phone number of 305-722-3157 with the caller claiming to be an employee of a bank or workers' compensation insurance. He/she says that the bank/insurance needs to send you a package of information and repeatedly insists that a verbal confirmation of "ok" is given. Sometimes the caller will try to deceptively obtain your center's bank account information. Once you agree to accept the information packet, you will receive another phone call, this time from "Merchant Services" at 1-877-613-7981. Supposedly this call is meant to confirm your acceptance of the package. Instead, the phone call is really an UNAUTHORIZED ELECTRONIC DEBIT OF YOUR BANK ACCOUNT.

Please be vigilant and protect yourself and your center by alerting each member of your staff about this fraudulent practice. Notify local police and your bank immediately at 305-476-5423 if you suspect you have been a victim of bank fraud.

## Children's Movement of Florida



Led by a 27-member committee of influential Floridians, the Children's Movement of Florida has announced a statewide, citizen-led, non-partisan series of "Milk Parties" on behalf of Florida's children. The sweeping series of 15 "Milk Party" rallies will be conducted throughout Florida between Sept. 6 and Sept. 30, beginning in Pensacola and ending in Key West. The goal is to attract substantial media coverage.

The events will include appearances by movement leaders, children's advocates, entertainers and local celebrities and supporters. **Refreshments will include milk and cookies.** A bus called "The Children's Express" will carry the group on "The Children's Movement Road Tour" from city to city. No public funds are being used.

The objective: To educate political, business and civic leaders - and all parents in Florida - about the urgent need to improve the way we care for our children, making the well-being and education of our youngest and most vulnerable citizens, Florida's highest priority. The need is clear: By almost every objective standard, Florida ranks poorly in measure after measure of how we invest in children.

Through the sheer magnitude of these rallies and the thousands of supporters who attend them, the aim is to show influential leaders in Tallahassee and everywhere else that we have the power to obtain for Florida's children the resources they require and deserve. The Children's Movement of Florida is supported by a broad coalition that includes hundreds of children's advocates and others.

For information about the "Milk Party" rally scheduled for your area, about the origins, objectives and leaders of the Children's Movement of Florida, and about the current state of Florida's children, please visit [www.childrensmovementflorida.org](http://www.childrensmovementflorida.org).

The Children's Movement also has a Facebook fan page, [www.facebook.com/childrensmovementfl](http://www.facebook.com/childrensmovementfl). Please visit the page and click on the "like" button, and encourage family and friends to do so as well. Thank you.



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

**Q: What is The Children's Movement of Florida?**

A: The Children's Movement of Florida is a citizen-led, non-partisan movement to educate political, business and civic leaders - and all parents of the state - about the urgent need to significantly improve upon the inadequate manner in which Florida treats its children.

Our goal is to encourage the people and leaders of Florida to make the well-being and education of our children the state's highest priority, especially when it comes to the investment of public resources in programs that make a real difference in the lives and futures of children.

**Q: Why is this necessary?**

A: By almost every objective standard, Florida ranks poorly in measure after measure in how we invest in children.

**Q: Can you cite examples of that?**

A: Here are just a few:

- More than 800,000 of our children are not covered by health insurance.
- The state's prekindergarten program does not meet most national standards.
- Early screening and treatment programs for children with special needs are poorly coordinated, difficult to access and of inconsistent quality.
- A quarter of our public high school students do not graduate.
- Florida's businesses and community organizations are not committed to strengthening child mentoring and parent skill-building programs.

**Q: What is at stake here?**

A: Nothing less than the economic future of our state and the stability, safety and security of the communities in which we live.

If these multiple failures remain uncorrected, the associated economic and social burdens can become crushing. For instance, studies show that \$1 invested in high-quality early childhood programs can save society at least \$4 in costs associated with more prisons, more police and prosecution, more remedial programs, higher health-care obligations. Furthermore, we know from significant research that 90 percent of human brain development occurs by age 5. If children are our future, then shouldn't Florida invest more in them when it matters the most - during their earliest years?

**Q: What sort of programs do you have in mind?**

A: We have identified five areas for a first focus of special interest and action: Access to quality health care. Screening and treatment for special needs. Quality pre-kindergarten opportunities. High-quality mentoring programs. Support and information for parents.

**Q: What about elementary and secondary education?**

A: We support a bold commitment by the state to fully fund a high-quality education for all children. Our children - and our economy and our future - require that. Many foundations, school boards, teacher organizations, parent associations and other entities already work toward those goals. The Children's Movement of Florida is determined to fill the void in advocating for support of programs that are crucial to children at earlier ages.

**Q: Who is leading this movement?**

A: The leaders:

- [David Lawrence Jr.](#), president of [The Early Childhood Initiative Foundation](#), founding chair of The Children's Trust, University Scholar for early childhood development and readiness at the University of Florida, and former publisher of The Miami Herald.

- [Roberto Martinez](#), former U.S. attorney in South Florida, current member of the [Florida Board of Education](#), and a partner at the law firm of Colson, Hicks, Eidson based in Coral Gables.

Lawrence and Martinez co-chair a [27-member steering committee](#) that began planning and overseeing this initiative in 2009.

**Q: How will you accomplish your goals?**

A: After considerable research and planning, a major effort now is underway to muster and demonstrate statewide support for The Children's Movement of Florida and its objectives. Some 15 to 20 "Milk Party" events and rallies will be held throughout Florida during September 2010. Complete details soon will be posted on our website.

We expect these events to attract thousands of people, along with extensive media coverage. An outpouring of support would help convince political, business and civic leaders to significantly elevate the priorities assigned to children's issues.

**Q: How can you know this will work?**

The group conducted a pilot project in Palm Beach County during April and May 2010. Surveys conducted before and after that pilot project found that a series of community events - backed by an extensive informational media campaign - dramatically increased awareness of the inadequacy of children's programs in Florida and substantially enhanced support for a statewide children's movement. You can read the final report [here](#).

**Q: Are any tax dollars being used in this effort?**

A: No tax dollars are being used during any phase of this project.

**Q: Then how are you paying for it?**

A: The pilot project in Palm Beach County was funded by [The W.K. Kellogg Foundation](#), which supports children, families and communities. The statewide Children's Movement of Florida is being funded by contributions raised by its leaders.

**Q: Are you advocating tax increases to pay for these improvements in children's programs and these larger investments in the development of Florida's children?**

A: We are not advocating statewide tax increases. Rather, we insist that children's issues receive the highest priority, and a much larger share of resources.

**Q: So, what priorities would see reduced support in order to divert more funds into children's programs?**

A: It is up to our legislators and other elected officials to listen to the citizens of Florida and then act accordingly when it comes to prioritizing the allotment of public resources.

**Q: Are you endorsing political candidates?**

A: No. This is an educational and informational campaign. We hope that Floridians will hear our message, enlist in this movement and then work in whatever way they see fit to ensure that the necessary public and private resources are dedicated to ensuring the full and proper nurturing of our most important resource - our children.

\*Summary information and FAQs provided by the Children's Movement of Florida.

Join us for the Children's Movement Miami-Dade Milk Party Rally on Wednesday, September 29th!



**MIAM-DADE MILK PARTY RALLY**

**WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 29, 2010**  
6:30 PM - 7:30 PM (DOORS OPEN @ 6:00PM)

**Miami-Dade County Auditorium**  
2901 West Flagler Street  
Miami, FL 33135

### 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 Ileana Vallejo, Human Resources Benefits Manager.

Ileana Vallejo has been working at the ELC since October of 2003. As the HR manager she is responsible for guiding and supporting each staff member with respect to employee relations and the efficient administration and management of all the organization's offered benefits. Moreover she enforces ELC policies and procedures to promote a compliance-focused culture, ensures adequate internal controls in accordance with all applicable laws, and makes certain that regulations and HR principles are consistent with the Coalition's vision, mission and values.



While Ileana feels fortunate to have played a pivotal part in many successful events and accomplishments at the ELC, most notably the HR Network Conference and Benefits Fair, it is the opportunities that take her out of the office and into the community's early learning centers which she finds most gratifying, "Provider site visits and events have been especially enjoyable. It's nice to get out and see firsthand the value and impact of the important work we do in this community. For me, the most meaningful aspect of working at the Coalition is being able to indirectly affect the lives of children and families," she says.

In her prior professional experience, Ileana acquired valuable knowledge and experience in many aspects of human resources, accounting, and administrative operations. Previous positions included working as a staff accountant at Willow CSN Inc., the pioneer of flexible, virtual call-center service solutions for organizations; an accounting supervisor at Weiss & Associates, a real estate and commercial property advertising and PR firm; an executive assistant/administrator at Killian Oaks Academy; and a payroll/HR assistant for Chase Federal Bank where she was first introduced to the field of human resources.

Outside of the ELC, Ileana enjoys spending free time with her family and friends.

### Miami-Dade County News Briefs

School Readiness (SR)

#### Child Screening and Assessment Update

Welcome back to school year 2010-11. The Early Learning Coalition in collaboration with Miami-Dade County Child Development Services will continue providing an annual developmental screening for every school readiness child with signed parental consent. The results of the screenings are helpful in determining if a child is developing typically, may be at risk for delays and/or should be referred for further evaluation.

The Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ) will be mailed monthly beginning in September as school readiness children will be screened in their birth month rather than all at the same time. This should ease the burden on teachers having to complete many screenings in a short period of time. Additionally, there will be no need to determine which ASQ a child will need; it will be the 12-, 24-, 36-, 48-, or 60-month questionnaire. At the beginning of each month centers will receive the ASQs in the mail. They should be completed immediately and returned by the 20<sup>th</sup> of the month. A self-addressed envelope in which to return the completed questionnaires will also be provided.

For more information or assistance in completing the ASQs, please call Miami-Dade County Child Development Services at 305-953-6007 in the North or 305-270-2905 in the South.

### New Contact Information for Miami-Dade County's Mail-in Redetermination Unit

As of August 6th, the new contact information for Miami-Dade County's Mail-in Redetermination Unit is the following:

Martin Luther King Office Plaza- Suite 4000  
2525 NW 62<sup>nd</sup> Street  
Miami, Florida 33147  
305-514-6810

Office Manager: Maria Escobar  
Eligibility Supervisor: Nathasis Sonny  
Email: [childcare@miamidade.gov](mailto:childcare@miamidade.gov)

Fax numbers:  
305-514-6824  
305-514-6825  
305-514-6826  
305-514-6827  
305-514-6828

Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK)

### VPK Trainings Now Require a \$10 Charge

Due to recent budget cuts the DOE's Office of Early Learning was regrettably forced to implement a charge for all classes taught by the VPK regional facilitator.

As of September 1<sup>st</sup>, those wishing to attend the 2008 VPK Standards Training must now pay \$10.00. Participants will be asked to submit their payment when registering online. Those who have not registered and paid online will not be admitted to class. As a result, unfortunately walk-ins can no longer be accommodated.

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### Monroe County News Briefs

*Save the Date*

#### Monroe County Directors' Meeting- Upper Keys

Thursday, September 2nd; 6:00 - 8:00 p.m.  
St. James Children's Center, 87500 Overseas Highway, Islamorada

or

Monroe County Directors' Meeting- Lower Keys

Wednesday, September 8th; 6:00 - 8:00 p.m.

Wesley House Family Services, 1304 Truman Avenue, Key West

Please join ELC and WHFS staff to discuss important information for the new 2010-2011 School Readiness and VPK program year. New contact requirements, environmental monitoring, fiscal procedures and training opportunities will be discussed. Director participation is strongly encouraged.

Monroe County Pyramid Model Implementation Kick-Off: Special Keynote Presenter- Rochelle Lentini

Saturday, September 25th; 8:30 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.

San Pablo Church Hall, 550 122nd Street Ocean, Marathon

The ELC and WHFS (in collaboration with our Monroe Co. School District partners, Head Start and Child Find/FDLRS) are pleased to sponsor the kick-off event to introduce a series of Pyramid Model trainings for early childhood educators in Monroe County. Special keynote presenter is Rochelle Lentini, Positive Behavior Support Project Director, Department of Child and Family Studies, University of South Florida. Ms. Lentini will provide an overview training on the CSEFEL Pyramid Model, which provides evidenced-based practices for promoting young children's social-emotional development and preventing and addressing challenging behaviors in the classroom. Those who have attended workshops with Ms. Lentini know that this will be an informative, engaging, "hands-on" learning experience. A registration flyer will be distributed shortly with additional information.

Monroe County Advisory Committee Meeting

Thursday, September 30th; 1:00 p.m.

Monroe County School District Board Room, 241 Trumbo Road, Key West

Please join ELC Monroe board members, ELC CEO Evelio Torres, ELC staff and our community partners as we discuss important information of interest and concern to our early care and education provider community. Provider participation is strongly encouraged in our first quarterly meeting of the new 2010-2011 program year.

\*Note: Participation via school district videoconferencing is available at Marathon High School, Room 2106; and Coral Shores High School, Library Media Center Conference Room, Tavernier.

To participate via conference call, the call-in number is 1-888-813-8477, pass code 143130.

Children's Movement of Florida "Milk Party" Rally - Key West

Thursday, September 30th; 6:00 - 7:00 p.m.

Key West High School Auditorium, 2100 Flagler Avenue

The Children's Express bus will roll into Key West as part of a statewide campaign to encourage the people and leaders of Florida to make the well-being and education of our children the state's highest priority. Led by a 27-member committee of influential Floridians (including Dave Lawrence, president of The Early Childhood Initiative Foundation), the movement is organizing a series of 15 "Milk Party" rallies throughout Florida - from Pensacola to Key West - between Sep. 6 and Sept. 30. Parents, teachers and all interested citizens Keys-wide are encouraged to attend the Key West rally, with a goal of 1,000 participants to fill the auditorium and send a strong message to our leaders. For additional information about the Children's Movement of Florida, visit their website at <http://childrensmovementflorida.org>. Additional information specific to the Key West rally is forthcoming.

KidCare Adds United Healthcare to Offer Parents Greater Choice

With more than 394,560 children in the state of Florida still uninsured as of 2007, Florida Healthy Kids Corp. is now providing low-income families with a second choice of an insurance provider, United Healthcare. To read the *Key West Citizen* story in its entirety, please visit [www.elcmdm.org](http://www.elcmdm.org).

## Quality Counts

In 2007, the **Web-Based Early Learning System (WELS)** became the QRIS web-based information system for Quality Counts in Miami-Dade County. The Miami WELS system captures all necessary data for each of the six Quality Counts Standards. Just one of WELS's several innovative features is the shopping cart which is linked to a learning environment online catalog based on ERS subscales. Using support grants for achievement awards, this catalog enables providers to select classroom materials and equipment best suited for classroom improvement.

WELS is a data system that was created to tell the story of how support, quality efforts and investments are making a difference in early learning programs and how these efforts impact children and their development. This idea was born from Muriel Wong who has over 30 years of knowledge and experience in Miami's early care and education system.

Carlos Valdes is responsible for WELS development and support, and is the CEO of Bluejean Software, Inc. and president and CEO of PC Depot, Inc., a technology-support provider in South Florida and Jacksonville. PC Depot offers onsite and remote technical support to local businesses and non-profit organizations. Carlos has 19 years of IT experience in all facets of technology (support, programming, planning, auditing, and managing), and specializes in network operating systems, hardware and database administration

John Fiedler, President of Bluejean Software, Inc. and WELS System Architect, graduated from Georgia Tech, and worked for nine years in the space and aeronautical industries. Carlos and John work with a team of top-notch programmers: Juan Daruna, Alina Diaz and Yunez Marin, who together have created a comprehensive and user-friendly data system. Each brings the expertise and the commitment essential to supporting WELS.

The WELS team is committed to working closely with the ELC and Quality Counts to provide responsive data systems that support providers and early learning programs in their service to Miami-Dade County's young children and their families.

From left to right: Muriel Wong, Alina Diaz, Carlos Valdes, Yunez Marin, John Fiedler, and Juan Daruna.



Join Our  
Mailing List 

2555 Ponce de Leon Blvd. Suite 500; Coral Gables, FL 33134

