

Message from the President & CEO

Evelio C. Torres

May 1, 2009

It is my pleasure to bring you the good news that Governor Charlie Crist recently announced the availability of dollars for early learning from the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act. Below is an excerpt of his news release (you may visit <http://www.flgov.com/release/10666> to read the release in its entirety).

“TALLAHASSEE - Governor Charlie Crist, continuing his efforts to reinvigorate Florida’s economy, today announced the availability of \$105 million in federal economic stimulus funds over three years for Florida’s Early Learning program. The stimulus funding will be distributed to the state’s Early Learning Coalitions by the Florida Agency for Workforce Innovation to provide additional child care opportunities for income-eligible parents and help enhance the quality of child care services to children and families.”

The amount allocated to serve the families of Miami-Dade and Monroe is just over \$5.7 million. While we are indeed very fortunate to have access to these dollars to serve the children of Miami-Dade and Monroe Counties, part of my responsibility is to keep us focused and grounded. Here are a few things to keep in mind:

Our number one priority for these dollars is to stimulate the local economy by maintaining or creating child care slots. This will allow children to participate in high-quality early care and education programs so that their parents/caregivers are able to work. The other priority, as stated in the Governor’s release, is to “help enhance the quality of child care services to children and families.”

There are currently 28,000 children enrolled in the School Readiness program at an average daily cost of \$355,000. \$5.7 million pays for 16 days of care. In terms of the number of children that will be served with these dollars, it is approximately 1,400 over a one-year period.

In anticipation of receiving these dollars we began enrolling children in the School Readiness program. Adding children to the program before the dollars were received has helped many families with child care expenses when they needed it most. As a result, we will not see a large surge in enrollment. As children leave the program new children will be enrolled.

Using the stimulus dollars to provide a high-quality early education to the children of Miami-Dade and Monroe Counties and supporting the work of our early care and education providers continues to be our number one priority. We look forward to working in partnership with our entire community to use these dollars to help as many families as possible.

I remain at your service.

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

