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## ELC News Alert

Issue 6  
June/July 2011

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### President's Message



Dear Friends:

I am pleased to announce that the Quality Counts voluntary quality rating improvement program (QRIS) at the Early Learning Coalition of Miami-Dade/Monroe has been invited to join NAEYC's Pathways to Cultural Competence Project (PCCP). The main goal of the project is to guide early childhood programs to reflect upon and improve their use of culturally competent practices. The Quality Counts team and the ELC have the distinction of representing the only county, Miami-Dade County, in joining 12 states and the District of Columbia in this groundbreaking work.

PCCP is funded by the Mailman Family Foundation and operates under the direction of NAEYC. As a participant, the ELC is eligible to receive resources from NAEYC and technical assistance from the PCCP advisory board of national leaders. The Coalition's Quality Counts team will also be attending national meetings to share and chronicle its work as it unfolds.

As always I'm at your service.

Sincerely,

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

## Quick Links

[Early Learning Coalition](#)

[VPK](#)

[Agency for Workforce Innovation](#)



## Important Announcements

### Kicking-Off the ELC's *Look Before You Lock* Campaign



CBS4 recently aired a story on the official launch of *Look Before You Lock*, our campaign designed to remind parents and caregivers that no amount of time is okay to leave a child alone in a car, particularly in hot and steamy South Florida where summer temperatures are already soaring. We hope you will take a moment out of your busy day to click

on the link below and see our very own Evelio Torres, President & CEO, and Fred Hicks, CIO, discuss the campaign and its purpose.

<http://miami.cbslocal.com/2011/06/01/group-kicks-off-look-before-you-lock-campaign/>

\*The latest videos are located on the right-hand side of the webpage--to locate the one about our campaign launch, simply select the video with the image of the *Look Before You Lock* logo!

### Avoiding Tragedy: Preventing Choking in Infants and Young Children

Tragically and all too often, infants and young children perish from choking. The majority of these cases are the result of toys and other household items getting into children's reach. Choking deaths are preventable if parents and caregivers closely supervise their children and watch carefully to keep all potentially dangerous items such as food, toys, and household items out of their grasp.

A few safety tips for meal- and play-time include:

- Cut up foods that are firm and round and can get stuck in your child's airway
- Follow the age restrictions and guidelines labeled on the packages of toys
- Frequently check under furniture and between cushions for dangerous items young children can find and put in their mouths (e.g., marbles, coins, pens, etc.)
- Learn how to perform CPR if you are a parent, grandparent or caregiver should an emergency choking situation ever occur

To learn more life-saving tips as well as information on safety resources, please visit <http://www.kidsource.com/safety/prevent.choke.html>.

### 2011 Hurricane Season

Florida's 2011 hurricane season officially began June 1st and continues through November 30th. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) has reported that this particular Atlantic hurricane season will be above normal. Accordingly, please take some time to review your emergency plans for both home and work. To learn how you can increase your family's preparedness for what is forecast to be a busy hurricane season, please visit

<http://www.floridadisaster.org/eoc/PressReleases/Governor%20Scott%20proclaims%20Florida%20Preparedness%20Week%20Release%205%2023%202011.pdf>.

### Race to the Top - Early Learning Challenge: Establishing and Expanding High-Quality Early Learning Programs

Last week, the U.S. Department of Education announced an important grant opportunity for states. The Race to the Top - Early Learning Challenge fund will be jointly administered by the Departments of Education and Health and Human Services. The competition will call for states to take a comprehensive approach to developing integrated, high-quality early learning systems, which in turn will help ensure that more children, especially high-needs children, enter school ready and able to succeed.

## Upcoming Board and Committee Meetings

Board  
Monday, June 6  
8:00 a.m.  
Board Room

Program & Strategy  
Tuesday, June 28  
3:30 p.m.  
Board Room

Finance  
Wednesday, June 29  
8:00 a.m.  
Board Room

Program & Strategy  
Tuesday, July 26  
3:30 p.m.  
Board Room

Finance  
Wednesday, July 27  
8:00 a.m.

## Board Room

Audit  
Wednesday, July  
27  
9:00 a.m.  
Board Room

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

Specific competition requirements, priorities, and selection criteria are still under development. However, consistent with the statute, applicant states will need to take actions to:

- Increase the number and percentage of low-income and disadvantaged children in each age group of infants, toddlers, and preschoolers who are enrolled in high-quality early learning programs;
- Design and implement an integrated system of high-quality early learning programs and services; and
- Ensure that any use of assessments conforms to the recommendations of the national Research Council's reports on early childhood.

The grant competition will focus on improving early learning and development programs for young children by supporting efforts relative to the above goals. Awards in Race to the Top will go to states that are leading the way with ambitious yet achievable plans for implementing coherent, compelling, and comprehensive early learning education reform. While our state does not have a statewide Quality Rating Improvement System like other states and some may question if Florida is really "leading the way," particularly after this past legislative session, the ELC feels that the work being accomplished by our Florida Quality Counts Collaborative and with AWI and others at the state level may grant Florida some of these funds. Only state agencies may apply for these monies, so the Coalition will be working closely with the Office of Early Learning (under DOE) on the application.

### Important 2011 Legislative Session Wrap-Up

The ELC wanted to share the outcome of the 2011 legislative session with you in terms of its impact to Florida's early learning system; its consequences will be felt by the children and families of each and every community in the state. As it currently stands, statewide we will not be able to serve over 15,000 children currently participating in Florida's school readiness program. This information is important for you to know because Miami-Dade and Monroe counties will be hit particularly hard by the budget reductions.

The highlights of the session are as follows:

**Subsidized School Readiness Program (SR)** - this program assists working poor families with the cost of child care: children learn while parents earn.

- In the 2009-10 fiscal year, the School Readiness program suffered a reduction of \$38 million. The impact of that reduction was not immediately felt because American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (stimulus) dollars were used to fill the budget gap. Since the legislature was not able to fully restore the budget during the 2011 session, we will have \$27 million less statewide. Miami-Dade and Monroe's share of this reduction is over \$5 million.
- There is also a federal Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (one of the funding sources for the School Readiness program) reduction of \$32 million. Unless the Governor vetoes this particular line item, Miami-Dade and Monroe's share of this reduction is just over \$6 million.
- In total, we will have over \$11 million less for the fiscal year that starts on July 1, 2011.

**Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK)** - this program is in our state constitution and provides free pre-kindergarten for all four-year-olds in Florida.

- There was a 7% reduction in the Base Student Allocation (BSA). This is the reimbursement that early care and education providers, including the public school system and charter schools, receive per student. The new BSA is \$2,383 for the school year and \$2,027 for the summer.

## Contact us

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[www.elcmdm.org](http://www.elcmdm.org)

- To make up for the reduction in the BSA for providers (to help keep provider revenues level), the teacher-child ratios (class size) were increased to 1:11 and 2:20, so there will be more 4-year-olds in every classroom.
- Administration and program support (quality assurance, provider certification, eligibility determination) was reduced from 4.5% to 4%. This will most certainly result in longer wait times for parents trying to register their children for the program and scaled back quality improvement efforts.

The public process of implementing these reductions will now begin. Over the next month or so our board of directors will have to make many very difficult decisions that include the disenrollment of children from our early education programs, reducing investments in educational quality improvement programs for children ages 0 - 5, as well as reductions in every other area. These decisions will be made with input from our community and we certainly hope that you will join us for the discussions.

### Florida's Minimum Wage of \$7.31 is Now in Effect

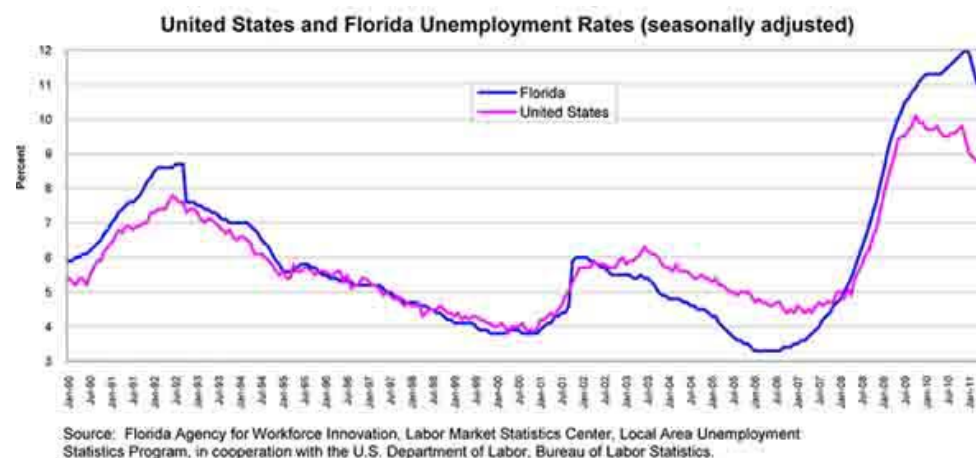
Effective June 1st, the minimum wage for Florida was raised \$.06 an hour to \$7.31. An adjusted minimum wage rate is calculated by AWI each year per Florida law.

Employers must pay their employees the hourly state minimum wage for all hours worked in Florida. Additionally, State Statutes require that employers who must pay their employees the Florida minimum wage must also post a notice with the minimum wage in a conspicuous and accessible location in each establishment where respective employees work. This poster requirement is in addition to the federal requirement to post a notice of the federal minimum wage.

To download posters with the Florida and/or Federal minimum wages in English or Spanish, please visit <http://www.floridajobs.org/minimumwage/index.htm>. Information regarding compliance with the Fair Labor Standards Act is also available.

### Florida Releases its Employment Figures for April

For April 2011, Florida's Agency for Workforce Innovation (AWI) reported that the State's seasonally adjusted unemployment rate is 10.8 percent, the lowest it has been since September of 2009. This has been the fourth-consecutive-month of decline in the State's unemployment rate, a positive sign for job seekers.



To read more details about the current state of Florida's labor force, please visit <http://elcmdm.org/downloads/AWIemployment0411.pdf>.

\*Source: Agency for Workforce Innovation (AWI) press release, "Florida's April Employment Figures Released - May 20, 2011; 10:00 AM."

## Take the Kids to a FREE Fun-Filled Family Event this Summer!

South Florida Parenting presents "Back to School Splash"

August 6 & 7, 2011; 12:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.

The Falls, 8888 SW 136th Street, Miami

FREE kid-friendly activities include stage entertainment, paddle boat pool, fishing games, Pirate's Cove Treasure Hunt, hands-on crafts and more! For more information, please visit [www.southfloridaparenting.com](http://www.southfloridaparenting.com).

## Employment Opportunities at Miami Children's Initiative

Growing non-profit organization seeking to fill the following positions:

- \* Grant Writer
- \* Community Engagement Coordinator
- \* Social Service Coordinator
- \* Administrative Assistant
- \* Computer Programmer

Please send all resumes to: [resumes@miamichildrensinitiative.org](mailto:resumes@miamichildrensinitiative.org). The submittal deadline is June 15, 2011.

## Children's Movement of Florida



The Children's Movement of Florida is a statewide, citizen-led, non-partisan campaign with the objective of educating 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. To learn more about

the movement, please visit [www.childrensmovementflorida.org](http://www.childrensmovementflorida.org)

## Team Member Spotlight

Michelle Meilan joined the Early Learning Coalition in April of 2008. As a Quality Assurance programs monitor, Michelle ensures providers: maintain the required documentation on their children and staff, fulfill their obligations as outlined in their provider agreement, implement effective VPK programs and/or confirm that School Readiness providers purchase ELC-approved curricula.



Prior to Michelle's role at the Coalition, she spent five years working as a Miami-Dade County Public Schools pre-kindergarten and kindergarten teacher and two years as a 3<sup>rd</sup>-grade teacher in a private school. Michelle's experience in the classroom has proven beneficial in her work at the ELC, "Having a background in education and having been in the classroom for many years have been definitive pluses in carrying out my monitoring duties. I feel joy when I assist teachers in developing better lesson plans and giving them insight on teaching methods that worked for me as a teacher," she explains.

Michelle will be continuing her studies at Nova Southeastern University (NSU) in July, pursuing a degree to be an educational specialist in curriculum and teaching. She is also a gifted photographer. At one point in time Michelle put her talent and skills to professional use and shot photographs of weddings, birthdays, and family portraits, etc. These days she enjoys the practice of creating pictures as a hobby.

# Miami-Dade County News Briefs

*School Readiness (SR)*

## The Ages and Stages Questionnaire-3 is Coming to Miami-Dade County

The ELC is pleased to inform you of the implementation of the Ages and Stages-3 child screening system. As you know, your Provider Agreement specifically addresses your responsibility to screen all School Readiness children annually; this clause can be found in your Provider Agreement, page 10, items 22-23, as per mandate 411.01 (5)(c)2.f, F.S.

Owners/directors, you will receive via U.S. mail, a registration form to attend a training on how to administer the ASQ-3 and to receive your free ASQ-3 screening kit. This training is being provided specifically for owners/directors as a signature for the kit will be required.

The trainings will be conducted throughout the community and you will receive an official training certificate that you can display in your early care and education center.

Be on the lookout for your invitation to trainings in your neighborhood. If you have any questions, please contact Bethany Sands at [bsands@elcmdm.org](mailto:bsands@elcmdm.org) or 305-646-7220, ext 281.

## *Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK)*

### FREE Florida VPK Assessment Trainings for June 2011

#### Training Location

St. John the Apostle School  
479 East 4<sup>th</sup> Street  
Hialeah, FL

\*Tuesday June 21, 2011; 2:00 to 4:30 p.m.; Reference #1262

#### Training Location

Miami-Dade College - Homestead Campus  
500 College Terrace, Building G, Room 105  
Homestead, FL

\*Thursday, June 23, 2011; 2:00 to 4:30 p.m.; Reference #1276

#### SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS:

Classes begin on time! Anyone arriving at 2:15 p.m. or later for the 2:00 p.m. class will not be admitted--no exceptions! You are not permitted to be more than 15 minutes late for class because you will be receiving CEUs for your attendance. Thank you for our cooperation.

Please note: You must bring your Florida VPK Assessment Kit to participate in the assessment training.

# Monroe County News Briefs

## Monroe County Mini-Conference for Infant/Toddler and Preschool Teachers

Preschool teachers and directors, 113 in total, attended the recent mini-conference in Key West sponsored by Wesley House, the ELC and the NAS Key West Child and Youth Programs. Providers who received accreditation and/or re-accreditation during the program year as well as FCCPC graduates of the Wesley House-sponsored ten-month training program were recognized at the event.

Five sessions, including infant/toddler and preschool, supported the theme of social-emotional development of young children and preventing challenging behaviors in the classroom.

Additionally, DOE Regional Facilitator Kerry Allen provided an overview of the new draft, *Four-Year-Old Standards*; the ELC's Sandra Ampudia presented two sessions for infant/toddler teachers; and Monroe County School District's Child Find Specialist Linda Welsh presented one infant/toddler session. Pyramid Model trainers included TATS Southeast Region Facilitator Lori Miranda and Maria Negron, Director of Family Support and Resource Centers at Healthy Start Coalition of Hillsborough County. In keeping with the social-emotional theme, co-sponsors NAS Key West Child and Youth Programs provided free "feelings" resource books for participants.



Pictured from left to right are Mary Williams, Managing Director- Monroe, ELC; Doug Blomberg, CEO, Wesley House; Nilda Bernaldez, President, Florida Keys Association of Early Childhood Educators; Evelio Torres, President & CEO, ELC; and Kathy Snyder, Child Care Services Director, Wesley House.

## The Coalition Receives a Grant to Expand FREE Health Care and Screenings to include VPK Children in Monroe County

The ELC is pleased to announce that it has received a grant award from the Health Foundation of South Florida to expand its current child health screening project, Children's Health Assessment and Medical Program (CHAMP II), in Monroe County.

The ELC and its partner, Florida Keys Area Health Education Center, began CHAMP as a way to provide FREE comprehensive health care and oral health services and screenings to at-risk and underprivileged children ages 0- to 5-years-old Keys-wide in private provider settings. Financial assistance will be available for follow-up medical/specialty care for School Readiness and VPK children whose parents are uninsured or underinsured. Non-subsidized private pay children may participate in the health screenings for a nominal fee.

# Quality Counts

## QC 'Thank You' Packages

This past spring, Quality Counts providers received 'thank you' packages from the Early Learning Coalition to enhance their learning environments. These packages included one consumable kit that contains an array of art supplies, as well as one infant/toddler or preschooler kit that contains an array of manipulatives and books.

Providers should note that if they do not need or wish to keep the items in their 'thank you' package, to please contact Fiorella Altare at 305-646-7220, ext. 272 and she will ensure the supplies are allocated to other providers in need.

## Attend a Healthy Living Training

Healthy Living Trainings address ways to prevent obesity and live a healthier lifestyle. Sessions are FREE, presented in both English and Spanish and are a perfect opportunity to earn in-service credit hours and/or gather engaging lesson plans for in-class activities. Breakfast will also be provided.

**Saturday, June 11th; 10 a.m. to 12 p.m.** (registration begins at 9 a.m.)

**Miami Dade College, Kendall Campus**

11011 SW 104th Street (Killian Parkway), Miami 33173

Building 4000 (J), Room 4103

Free Parking

**Saturday, June 25th; 10 a.m. to 12 p.m.** (registration begins at 9 a.m.)

**Miami Dade College West**

3800 NW 115th Avenue, Doral 33178

Free Parking

To RSVP please contact Brian Guerdat at [bguerdat@med.miami.edu](mailto:bguerdat@med.miami.edu). For more information call 305-243-7868 or 305-243-7885.

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