




February 2019

- How to please picky eaters
- Help develop spatial skills
- Start talking STEM early
- National Children's Dental Health Month

[Click to read February Parents' Pages.](#)

N-E-W-S

Early learning highlights from North, East, West and South Florida

***STEM takes hold in Fort Pierce thanks to ELC
Teachers hold first annual STEM FEST***

The STEM GEMS for St. Lucie County, a group of STEM teachers recruited and trained by [Early Learning Coalition of St. Lucie County](#)'s resource specialist, held their first STEM FEST in mid-January in Fort Pierce. More than 280 people came out to try the STEM activities and to support STEM education in St. Lucie County.

Activities included color-changing slime, rainbow rain, snow storm in a bag, electric art bots, button building, straw building, worm math, shapes in nature, foil boats, flying paper, STEM Bins and sound waves. Each child received a gift bag sponsored by the coalition.



Who is coalition's Preschool Teacher of the Year?

The [ELC of North Florida](#) recently announced their preschool 2018 Teacher of the Year. Angie Picket is pictured here with coalition mascot Elsie the Dinosaur. She is lead VPK teacher and educational director at Sugar and Spice Preschool in Orange Park. This is the fourth year the coalition has presented the award to a preschool teacher in the six-county area the ELC covers. The recognition acknowledges the creativity and hard work of those who teach children at the most fundamental time in their lives.

"Children who have had Picket as a teacher are well-prepared for kindergarten and leave with the foundational school readiness skills that are necessary for success in kindergarten," said coalition CEO Dawn Bell.



Coalition secures grant for team building.

Manatee ELC earns \$2K from community foundation.

The [Manatee County ELC](#) learned they would receive a grant from the Community Foundation of Sarasota County as part of the foundation's capacity building program recently. The grant to fund a team-building retreat for coalition staff was part of the organizational culture category. ELC CEO Paul Sharff said he was grateful for the support, which would help ensure a strong team for early learning.



Coalition staff enjoy 2019 Celebrate Literacy Week!



[ELC of Duval](#) staff members, literally, had fun reading to children at child care centers during 2019 Celebrate Literacy Week, Florida! Coalitions around the state followed their lead as teachers and children took time to enjoy reading and listening to others read.

Partnership picks up children who need help early

New mobile van goes to providers

A partnership between the [ELC of Flagler and Volusia](#) counties and Daytona State College School of Nursing is ongoing but it has a new twist. In October the coalition launched an *On the Go* hearing and vision screening, making them available on an RV at community events. The coalition has a mobile learning van and uses it for the screenings.

Temporary or partial hearing loss can have a major impact on speech development. Poor vision has an impact on early literacy and eye-hand coordination. To identify children with hearing and vision needs before entering kindergarten, the coalition purchased child-friendly screening equipment that captures reading rapidly and requires no verbal participation from children. This allows screening children of all ages and abilities, including infants. Last fall, a UCF nurse adjunct and her students were trained to administer screening at a child care provider. The coalition hopes to offer free services to even more families in the community. Nurses and students are screening at multiple child care providers during fall and spring semesters.



Calling all early learning educators...



A big success at NAEYC's 2018 conference, the Ooey Gooley Lady will soon be in Gainesville. The [ELC of Alachua County](#) is bringing Lisa Murphy (also known as the Ooey Gooley Lady) to present at their annual Tracks to Excellence Conference, Saturday, May 4, 2019, from 8 am-2 pm. Lisa's play-based, hands-on, child-centered workshops engage everyone. She has traveled the world sharing her humor, inspiration and energy, as well as her creative, stimulating activities. In this conference, Lisa will cover topics including "What if Today was Their Only Day?," "Ooey Gooley Squishy Plop!," "The Importance of Early Experiences" and more. Sponsored with the North Central Florida Chapter of FLAEYC, the event includes lunch. Interested? Register on the [website](#).

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