



EARLY LEARNING UPDATE

GOVERNOR SCOTT HIGHLIGHTS EARLY LEARNING

As part of an effort to draw attention and ensure support for early learning funding increases proposed in his 2014 “It’s Your Money Tax Cut Budget,” Governor Rick Scott recently visited VPK students and teachers in Panama City, Jacksonville and Miami. Noting that Florida is first in the country for access to prekindergarten, he praised results showing that children who complete VPK are more ready for kindergarten than those who do not attend. [Read more.](#)

LEGISLATURE TAKES UP EARLY LEARNING BILLS

Early learning bills are moving through both the Florida House and Senate. [HB 7069](#) and [SB 1702](#) build on the work that went into last year’s important legislation – [HB 7165](#). Email HB7165@oel.myflorida.com to receive periodic legislative updates.

WHO’S REALLY WATCHING YOUR CHILD?

DCF is a key partner in early learning, licensing child care facilities where children receive school readiness services. In a move to ensure safe, nurturing environments for children even beyond the walls of a center, the agency kicked off a statewide public service campaign titled *Who’s Really Watching Your Child?* The campaign invites people and businesses to contribute to early learning coalitions. Read more at www.myflfamilies.com/whoswatching.

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VPK student tackles project as Governor and classmate watch.

JUST THE FACTS

More than 343,000 children in Florida have received VPK or school readiness services through February of fiscal year 2013-14. Find a monthly profile plus state, coalition and program detail in OEL’s online [Fact Book](#).

N-E-W-S EARLY LEARNING COALITION HIGHLIGHTS FROM NORTH, EAST, WEST AND SOUTH



Final touches are being completed on a new office for the [ELC of Marion County](#) thanks to a great community collaboration.



More than 200 business leaders and educators attended the [ELC of Orange County](#)’s fourth annual State of Early Care and Education breakfast summit.

The [Early Learning Coalition of Polk County](#) contracts with the Polk County Health Department to provide vision and hearing screening services to more than 3,500 3- and 4-year-old children throughout the year. The program specifically targets coalition-funded children; however, vision and hearing screenings are available to any age-eligible child in the facility visited. Not only has the service had a positive impact on parents and children, it helps support the coalition’s mission and vision of preparing all children so that they enter school healthy, ready and eager to learn. A recent screening determined a VPK student needed to see an ophthalmologist, but her mom had no health insurance. The ELC contacted the health department, which, in turn, provided a voucher for an exam and glasses.

From an administrator in the [ELC of Escambia County](#) comes this report from their eligibility department:

“We had a client come in today off the waiting list. She saw a staff member to determine if she was eligible for services. When informed that she was eligible, she asked to speak with me. She told me how much she appreciated our assistance; that she and her children had been in an abusive situation; and this service will now allow her and her children to move into a home and start over. She said I had no idea how much this service will change not only her life but also the lives of her children.

“Each day we have the opportunity to make a difference in someone’s life. This is why we do what we do, every day.”

FOCUSING ON CHILDREN...

Florida’s official 2014 *Children’s Week* was April 6-11, but many organizations that work with children slide the dates a few days or more on both ends of the week to accommodate schedules and take advantage of the focus on children. There is an annual Hanging of the Hands event at the Capitol. Several coalitions hosted their *Children’s Week* events in March. Others have scheduled activities throughout the month of April. There is a complete calendar of events on the [Children’s Week website](#).



[ELC of Miami-Dade/Monroe](#) holds event at Miami Children’s Museum March 21.



[ELC of Pasco Hernando](#) hosts a successful Storybook Forest again this year.