



EARLY LEARNING UPDATE

AUGUST 2014

QUESTIONS ABOUT FLKRS? SIGN UP FOR A VPK WEBINAR...



VPK Bureau Chief Tara Huls had an attentive audience at the 2014 One Goal conference in Tampa when she spoke about VPK accountability and “demystifying” the Florida Kindergarten Readiness Screener. After eight years of using the same instruments, this year’s FLKRS, made up of two components – literacy readiness and observation – is using new screening tools. If you’re puzzled about FLKRS, you may be interested in signing up for one of a number of upcoming webinars for providers. For the full schedule, visit [OEL’s website](http://OEL's website) or email VPKQuestions@oel.myflorida.com.



Check out the [Back to School Countdown Calendar](#) on OEL’s [Parent Resources](#) web page.

THE GOVERNOR’S CORNER by Governor Rick Scott



We recently announced that in the upcoming legislative session we will propose an increase in Florida’s per-pupil spending to the highest level in our state’s history. Thanks in part to the hard work of our public servants, we already have the highest total spending in K-12 this year and gave every teacher the opportunity for a pay raise. Our hard work is continuing to pay off. Florida’s economy is back on track, and revenues are projected to stay at a strong enough rate to support these historic investments in education.

We know a great job begins with a great education. This increase in per pupil spending will provide our dedicated teachers and school districts with the support they need to ensure our students have the opportunities to succeed in classrooms and careers. With the help of our public servants. Florida’s exciting economic growth is making

these important investments possible. Let’s keep working to create an opportunity economy for generations to come.

JUST THE FACTS

Nearly 376,000 children in Florida have participated in VPK or school readiness programs through June of this fiscal year. Find details about state, coalition and program participation in OEL’s online [Fact Book](#).

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



A Jacksonville journalist captured VPK’s summer side in this [TV news report](#) on WJCT.

VPK summer program students slide down a fire pole at a children’s museum. Credit: Rhema Thompson/WJCT



The **ELC of Big Bend** has worked with a local auto dealer throughout August to *Cram the Van* with school supplies for children and families in need.



Big Bend also learned recently they will be getting an increase in funding for fiscal year 2014-15 from Tallahassee’s Community Human Service Partnership. Read the complete article in the [Tallahassee Democrat](#).

Earlier in August, the **ELC of Palm Beach** joined local organizations for a Back-to-School Bash at the Wayne Barton Center. Along with tips, ELC staff provided information to parents about VPK and school readiness.

Also from Palm Beach come **two stories** that remind us of the impact that early learning support and ser-

vices can have in the lives of children and their families.

“My life was in crisis,” writes **Patricia**. “I was a single mother raising my beautiful, 4-year-old girl. I was also a caretaker for my own mother, who was diagnosed with cancer. Then out

of nowhere, I was suddenly diagnosed with an aggressive form of breast cancer. I needed help. I needed a way to focus on my recovery and make sure my daughter Luciana had the opportunity to go to school. Right before

my last surgery, I was approved for the Children Services Council Emergency Scholarship through The Early Learning Coalition of Palm Beach County. With the help of coalition staff, I was able to get my daughter into a VPK program and I could focus on getting better. Today, we have a lot to celebrate. I am in remission and my daughter is reading, learning and playing like never before.”

Taylor Simone Allen’s mother Shay says thank you to the coalition. Born at 26 weeks, Taylor faced hurdles. At age 2 her mom knew it was time for Taylor to explore early education. A stressful decision for her parents, ELC staff reached out and started her at a family child care home. Allen said it was the best thing for Taylor; and it allowed her to go to work knowing that Taylor was getting the care she needed.



Said Allen, “There were things Taylor hadn’t been exposed to that she learned from the center that she still holds on to today.” Allen said Taylor got the foundation she needed to help with her challenges. “I’m so thankful Taylor had the opportunity to witness such a wonderful and loving place of learning. It is so important to place our children in an environment that he or she spends most of the day and can gather structure, stability and early learning.”

The **ELC of Escambia County** has joined with the *Little Free Libraries* movement to provide free books throughout the community. A recent article in the [Pensacola News Journal](#) [described the program](#). Newspaper vending machines are serving a new purpose in this project.

