



## EARLY LEARNING UPDATE — *SPECIAL 2-PAGE EDITION*

### LEADERSHIP TRANSITION

DECEMBER 2014



After 30 years of service to education in Florida—from exceptional student education to early learning—Shan Goff left the Office of Early Learning Nov. 30, turning leadership of the state’s early learning system over to Rodney MacKinnon, who is now interim executive director.

Rodney most recently served as inspector general for OEL. Prior to that, he served as an assistant general counsel and an accountability analyst for the office. Rodney began his career as an external auditor for the Juvenile Welfare Board of Pinellas County, a children’s services council. He received his bachelor’s and master’s degrees in business administration from Florida State University and a juris doctor from Stetson University College of Law.



*Note to readers: We asked coalitions and VPK contacts for success stories and got so many that we needed two pages to share them.*

### PARENT RESOURCES APLENTY

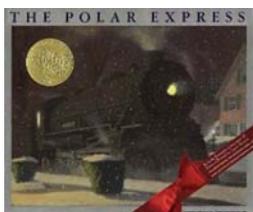
In addition to helping parents make informed choices for child care and offering information about resources available to them, the child care resource and referral services (or CCR&R) team also produces newsletters, publications and other interesting material for families. A new [Family Guide](#) and [Child Care Checklist](#) are now available. There is also a December issue of [Parents’ Pages](#) — a newsletter full of tips and ideas for families with young children. And, finally, there is a new [Winter Community Flyer](#) that lists resources for families who may need some extra help during the holidays.

### JUST THE FACTS

Nearly 306,000 children in Florida have participated in VPK or school readiness programs through October of this fiscal year. Find details about state, coalition and program participation in OEL’s online [Fact Book](#).

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

Early learning coalition calendars were full of happy events during December.



The [ELC of Marion County](#) invited the community to “ride the polar express” in support of literacy on Dec. 4. PJs were prescribed attire.

The [ELC of Manatee County](#) partnered with fire and police departments to offer child passenger safety education, bike helmet fitting and books at Christmas in the Park Dec.5-6. They continued to distribute books to children at early childhood centers across the county the following week.

[ELC of Southwest Florida](#) worked with Barnes and Noble to host a book fair that raised money for the ELC’s Literacy Buddies Program on Dec. 6. The program pairs children with adult “book buddies.” It was the fifth year for the successful event.

The [ELC of Alachua](#) was full of the holiday spirit, holding a warm clothing drive thru Dec. 12. Dec. 13 saw



them at Santa Fe College for Operation Santa Delivery, a big family community event where Santa



arrives via helicopter.

On Dec. 14, the [ELC of Orange County](#) collaborated with Orlando Armed Reserves for the third year in a row to



provide age-appropriate books and activities at their annual Christmas party for more than 200 reservists and their children. On Dec. 19,

thanks to support from BJ’s Wholesale and Marriott Vacation Club, the ELC will give out more than 1,000 gifts to provider network children.

The [ELC of Lake County](#) held their sixth annual holiday greeting card contest for 4-year-olds. The winning card, announced Dec. 19, will go to local dignitaries.



The [ELC of Pasco Hernando](#) took to the streets in several Christmas parades marching behind their mobile outreach van to hand out close to 3,000 books. They were joined by a 1970 vintage fire truck in one parade.

### THE GOVERNOR’S CORNER by Governor Rick Scott

As I travel the state, families tell me over and over that they care about three things: getting a great job, a quality education and keeping the cost of living low, and with the help of our dedicated public servants, that’s what we have focused on.

Our state and our public servants have a lot to be proud of. We’re outpacing the nation in job creation, we have some of the best teachers and schools in the country, and our quality of life is the best in the nation. Florida’s unemployment rate has dropped to 6 percent and we have created 679,000 private sector jobs since December 2010.

I believe Florida is the best state for business in the country, which is why companies like Embraer, Navy Federal, GE and Mitsubishi have decided to move and expand in Florida and create more jobs and opportunities for Florida families. The steps we have taken over the last four years have worked, and it would not have been possible without the support of Florida’s public servants.

Even though we have made great progress, there is still more work to do. Florida is on a mission – and that mission is to keep growing, and to become the very best place in the world to raise a family, to get a good paying job, to make a career, and build a great life. Let’s keep working.



**MORE** EARLY LEARNING HIGHLIGHTS FROM **NORTH, EAST, WEST AND SOUTH** FLORIDA

Children in the VPK program at Bob Graham Education Center in Miami Lakes got a hands-on opportunity to learn about farm animals during a visit from The Little Farm in November.



Thanksgiving Breakfast for students from Phillis Wheatley Elementary School, even funding a bus



to transport their young guests to breakfast so they could get there.

Leewood Elementary VPK classes in Miami-Dade held their annual Thanksgiving Family Feast. Children performed songs and



poems, dressed as Pilgrims and Indians, told families what they were thankful for and enjoyed a

feast with families and friends.

Pre-K students from M-DCPS Primary Learning Center in Miami hosted a

The **ELC of Miami-Dade/Monroe's** board of directors received handmade gifts from Aguamarina Preschool Brickell at their December board meeting.



Members popped balloons with handwritten messages from children inside and paintings created for each board member. In turn, the coalition presented Aguamarina with books for their classroom library.



Congratulations to the **ELC of Escambia County** (above). The Greater Pensacola Chamber named them the December small business of the month. And to Brevard County blend-ed-VPK teacher Kathleen Fan- to for winning the "No Child Left Inside" environmental education award (below) in Melbourne in November.



The **ELC of Broward County** received a \$1,562.94 book grant from Frist Book as a result of a dd's DISCOUNTS' youth literacy fundraiser. Each year the coalition and the store's employees give free books to VPK students and other children in the store during December.



In October, the coalition and other community partners held the Broward Early Childhood Educators Conference drawing more than 700 early childhood professionals to the conference, which had more than 40 educational sessions. Here's a link to a YouTube video with more information:

<http://youtu.be/S9OpaP-V1Zo>.

Fathers were the center of attention at a November *Donuts for Dads* event at one



of the **ELC of Flagler & Volusia's** child care centers. Not only did dads get donuts, but they also got handouts with helpful tips for fathers.

The Flagler/Volusia ELC also celebrated National Children's Day by highlighting diversity. Parents got stickers and parents and children made appreciation cards.

On Dec. 17, the **ELC of Duval** celebrated the 10-year anniversary of their Guiding Stars of Duval program, the quality rating improvement system for child care programs in Jacksonville and Duval County. The event honored

the 154 participating child care programs for their commitment to providing high quality child care to Jacksonville's children.



More than 300 people participated in the **ELC of the Big Bend Region's** first *Race for Readiness*—a one-mile fun run/walk in October. The event raised over \$10,000, all of which will go to helping children, families and child care providers. Three child care providers earned special thanks and gift cards for their involvement.



Dec. 10 brought good news to the **ELC of Palm Beach County**. They received a \$1.6 million federal grant for a new child care program for some of the

county's neediest neighborhoods. The coalition will use the grant for a new Early Head Start program for 150 children between ages 0 to 3 in West Palm Beach, Riviera Beach, Belle Glade and Pahokee. The grant will cover 10 child care centers and 14 family child care homes in Palm Beach County. The money is part of a \$500 million package

being distributed across the country by the Administration for Children & Families to boost early childhood care in high-need neighborhoods. For every dollar invested in early childhood programs there is a return of at least \$8 because society can reduce spending on special education, welfare and crime, according to a recent study.