



## EARLY LEARNING UPDATE

### WHAT'S AHEAD FOR EARLY LEARNING IN THE 2015 LEGISLATIVE SESSION?

FEBRUARY-MARCH 2015



It's March in Tallahassee and that means the 2015 Legislative Session is formally underway. Both the Florida House and Senate education committees are proposing early learning bills: **SB 7006** and **HB 7017**. The Senate is also moving forward with **SB 602**, which would expand Florida's Personal Learning Scholarship Accounts Program and make them available to 3- and 4-year-old students with disabilities across the state.



*Not only do lullabies soothe babies, they also help their brains develop. Find out more in the latest issue of **Early Learning Parents' Pages**.*

### ABOUT THE SCHOOL READINESS PROGRAM...



Even before children attend prekindergarten, they gain from experiences that help them be ready for school. That is why school readiness is such an important part of early learning. The program helps children from low-income families get the support they need to be successful in school. While helping children prepare for school, the program provides child care so a parent can work or attend a training or education program. Did you know...

- Florida ranks third nationally in the number of children and families served through school readiness.
- There were 224,169 children in school readiness in fiscal year 2013-14.
- 64 percent of families who get school readiness services are in the workforce.
- There were 9,467 school readiness child care providers in FY 2013-14.

### JUST THE FACTS

More than 321,000 children in Florida have participated in VPK or school readiness programs through December 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



Splash into summer with the **ELC** and learn all about the great local summer camps!

The **ELC of the Big Bend Region** held its 5th Annual Summer Camp Splash Sat., Mar. 7. Bounce houses, food trucks, face painting and more attracted families who wanted to sign children up for summer camp. The event was free and open to the community.

*Milk and Muffins* are on the menu for preschoolers, kindergartners and their parents in the Parramore area of downtown Orlando courtesy of the **ELC of**



**Orange County**. The free weekly Saturday morning reading camp began Feb. 21. Children, ages 3-6, do early reading activities with UCF students while parents learn ways to help their children get ready to read and be prepared for school success. Early learning coalitions around the state took part in activities for January's Celebrate Literacy Week, Florida!

Board members from the **ELC of Florida's Heartland**

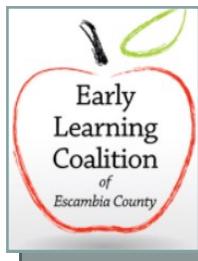


promoted the importance of early literacy by reading to children at child care provider sites.

Board members and staff from the **ELC of Pinellas County** joined guest readers at early childhood centers across Pinellas, reading and engaging in extension activities with the children. Guest readers



included a hospital CEO, local mayor and police department officials. The ELC also bought books for every school readiness and VPK provider in the county.



The **ELC of Escambia County** made a positive impact on Longleaf Elementary School in Pensacola when they donated books for the school's literacy night as part of the ELC's early literacy book program called First Books. A letter from the PTA called the gift a blessing to their families.

The **ELC of Duval** is planning to put a \$6,000 family engagement grant from the PNC Financial Group Foundation to use promoting family involvement by developing educational opportunities for families and child care providers. PNC employees earned the grant for the coalition through volunteering a certain number of hours.

Meanwhile, the **ELC of Orange County** just wrapped up the final year of a three-year Orlando Magic Youth Foundation grant that provided child development associate training to infant/toddler teachers. The effort has been so successful, the coalition is continuing the training program in 2015.



More than 100 community leaders attended a recent screening of the PBS documentary *Raising of America* sponsored in part by the **ELC of Seminole County**. OEL and coalition executive directors were part of a panel discussion afterward. Panelists strongly recommended that, "We need to mobilize the community to ensure that all children have access to high-quality early child care."