



Breaking news: Governor's KEEP FLORIDA WORKING budget invests more in early learning. See below.

EARLY LEARNING UPDATE

JANUARY 2015

IT'S A NEW LEGISLATIVE YEAR

January had barely begun and Governor Rick Scott had just been inaugurated for his second term in office when committee meetings to consider early learning initiatives got underway in advance of the 2015 Legislative Session.



OEL provided updates to both Florida House and Senate education committees and appropriations subcommittees.

The Senate Education Committee filed an early learning bill — [SB 7006](#) — similar to last year's HB 7069 that would provide for inspecting programs regulated by the department; revise certain minimum standards for child care facilities; include large family child care homes in local zoning regulation requirements; revise restrictions on residential property insurance coverage to include coverage for large family child care homes, and more.



Jan.26-30 is Celebrate Literacy Week in Florida. Activities promoting the importance of reading are taking place across the state.

TURNING RESOLUTIONS INTO REALITY IN 2015



Families often make New Year's resolutions and share them with one another. Help your family focus on them this year by talking about them as "hopes and dreams" or goals. Then ask family members to share their progress on a weekly or monthly basis. For more practical tips about keeping resolutions and other ideas for ways to help children learn and have fun at the same time, check out January's issue of [Early Learning Parents' Pages](#).

JUST THE FACTS

More than 314,000 children in Florida have participated in VPK or school readiness programs through November 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



The [ELC of Hillsborough County](#) chose a creative way to invite guests to an open house celebrating its 15th anniversary. The card was embedded with sunflower seeds and recipients were told to soak the card in water overnight, cover it with soil and keep it moist until seedlings appear. The event is Thurs., Jan. 29, from 3 to 5:30 p.m.

The [ELC of Southwest Florida](#) shared a success story about a 4-year-old in one of their child care programs who failed a vision screening performed by coalition staff. Staff recommended an ophthalmologist for further examination and possible treatment but the dad lacked insurance and

resources. Coalition staff got a donation from the Fort Myers Corvette Club to cover the exam and glasses to correct astigmatism in both eyes.

The [ELC of Marion County](#) shared this praise from J. Cruz, a happy father: "Let me just say as a 'parent' of a child in VPK, I am extremely excited at my daughter's progress. She is showing a lot of newly gained knowledge in random spurts (she usually plays coy about what she's learned until she surprises me with a new fact) and it's exciting to see. I appreciate the hard work it takes to keep this program running in a manner that appears seamless to the parent but impactful for the child. I know it will and is currently paying dividends in our lives and countless others."



VPK and school readiness providers got into the spirit of Florida's *Celebrate Literacy Week*, winning awards for entries in the Cozy Corner Photo Contest. Buttons and Bows Pre-school in Hollywood took first place.



Global Learning Child Development Center in Lake Worth took second.



Global Learning Center in Stuart placed third. Congratulations to all!

Governor's KEEP FLORIDA WORKING budget invests over \$1B in early education

Governor Rick Scott announced the details of his [2015-16 KEEP FLORIDA WORKING](#) budget today in Tallahassee. In it, he recommends \$1.06 billion in funding for early child education and care, an increase of approximately \$33.5 million. The proposed funding includes a \$46 per-child increase in the base student allocation for the VPK program, a \$30 million appropriation for a statewide initiative to decrease the school readiness program waiting list, and money for teacher scholarships and training.

In a news release, he said, "As a father and grandfather, I know first-hand that education is the key to a great future. Having quality early learning programs available for our youngest children is part of my commitment to ensuring that Florida is the top state in the nation for education and for jobs."

You can read the complete release and find further details at www.floridaearlylearning.com.

