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Parents' Pages



It's fun to learn!

New Family Portal Makes It Easier to Register for VPK and School Readiness



The Office of Early Learning has launched a new **Family Portal**, a one-stop window for VPK and School Readiness registration. Better, more convenient service for families across the state is key to our mission of providing quality early learning programs to young children and their families. Families can visit www.FloridaEarlyLearning.com to locate the early learning coalition nearest them, or go directly to their local coalition's website. Once there, the easy-to-use Family Portal makes registering for either VPK or School Readiness hassle-free.

MacKinnon Named Executive Director



When Rodney MacKinnon began working as external auditor for the Juvenile Welfare Board of Pinellas County in 2002, he did not foresee how much that first job after receiving a bachelor's degree in business administration at FSU would shape the direction of his career. He found that he loved the field of early learning and the sense of accomplishment that came from interacting with providers and constituents on a daily basis. At night, he attended Stetson University College of Law and earned a law degree.

Five years later, preparing to move to join the Office of Early Learning in Tallahassee as a compliance analyst, he wondered about missing daily interaction.

He soon discovered that he could have even greater impact. Later, when he began serving as an assistant general counsel and then inspector general at OEL, he saw results of his efforts statewide. In November 2014, he was named interim executive director.

Now, after being appointed executive director, he looks forward to continuing his work on behalf of early learners and their families.

About Florida's Voluntary Prekindergarten Program



Florida's VPK program is one of the largest in the nation. Free to all Florida families with 4-year-olds, approximately 200,000 children benefit every school year from high quality early learning programs offered by public and private care providers. Children who complete a VPK program are much better prepared for kindergarten and the rigors of a K-12 education than their peers who do not. **Why use VPK?**

- *With a focus on early literacy and socialization, the impacts of VPK are lifelong and contribute to future success.*
- *Small classes create a focused learning environment.*
- *VPK is for all children. Specialized Instructional Services are available for children with disabilities.*
- *Instructors trained in early literacy and developmental standards work with your child.*

N-E-W-S Early Learning Highlights from North, East, West and South Florida



The First Five Years Gala brought in six figures worth of support for the [Early Learning Coalition of Orange County](#) June 13. The event, supported by local community and business leaders, took in \$102,166. With matching state and federal funds, these contributions will yield \$1.6 million toward early care and education. "The numbers are just staggering," said Hannah Besaceny, coalition board chair and gala co-chair. "Just \$300 will provide a child with an early education for one year."

North Florida is seeing some new stars thanks to the [ELC of Escambia County](#). Their Summer Reading Starts program is underway after local providers received donations of more than 6,000 school-age books. Children who read the highest number of books by summer's end will receive recognition and supplies for going back to school.



The [ELC of Manatee County](#) received top honors from the *Tampa Bay Business Journal* June 15 when it was named 2015 Non-Profit of the Year. The award recognizes non-profit organizations who are "fiscally responsible and accountable with regard to program outcomes." The ELC topped 48 other finalists based in the Tampa Bay area.

For Palm Beach families looking to explore services offered by the [ELC of Palm Beach County](#), as of July 1, there will be "No Wrong Door." The coalition will now be handling Child Care Resource and Referral, Eligibility and Payments in addition to their wide range of services.

The *Fort-Meyers News Press* [recently printed an extensive Q & A](#) with [ELC of Southwest Florida](#) CEO Susan Block. "I get excited at the prospect of healthy, well developed children living in a thriving community where employees are confident in their child care choices," she says.



Kind encounters overheard from the [ELC of Flagler and Volusia](#): "As I was checking out at Publix one night, still wearing my ELCFV shirt, before I could even pay, the cashier came over and gave me a big hug. She thanked me for all we do for local families in need and was grateful for the help we provided her family."



Did you know that Father's Day started thanks to an appreciative daughter who wanted to recognize her widowed dad? Celebrate dads in the June issue of [Early Learning Parents' Pages](#).

Can it be that we are nearing the halfway point of summer? Yes, indeed. If you have exhausted ideas of things to do with preschoolers during the summer, please check the [2015 Summer Activities](#) page on the early learning website. There are any number of suggestions for great ways to combine an interesting and fun summer activity with an opportunity to learn — all of which adds up to making great summer memories in the years ahead.

