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March 2017

Early Learning Parents' Pages

Your toddler's social development timeline.

March brings nutrition, reading aloud, Children's Week and **St. Patrick's Day**.

[Click to read the March issue.](#)

LENA Technology Helps Close Word Gaps in Pensacola Child Care Centers

LENA Grow program bolsters interaction between teachers and children

Last fall, a Pensacola child care center launched a pilot program called LENA Grow through a partnership with the [Early Learning Coalition of Escambia County](#). LENA Grow measures the amount of talk going on in a classroom, providing objective feedback that helps teachers talk more with children.



Through LENA Grow, children wear a "talk pedometer" that enables teachers to measure how much they talk with their students. The children wear the LENA device about once a week. After that, the teachers meet with a coach from the coalition to talk through a LENA report that shows how much they spoke with the kids in the classroom. The teacher and coach then discuss strategies to encourage more interaction.

Early results from the pilot show that teachers in the toddler classrooms have increased how much they are speaking to the children by 54 percent, and the children are responding back 88 percent more on average than before the program began. Infant classrooms also show significant increases in interaction.

The program is part of the LENA System developed by the LENA Research Foundation to improve language environments for young children. The LENA System offers programs for teachers, caregivers and parents to help boost talk with infants and toddlers by analyzing recorded audio. Research since 1995 has shown that speaking to children, especially in the first two to three years of life, helps their brains develop

2017 Legislative Session Begins

Governor Rick Scott delivers "State of the State" message

It's that time of year again in Tallahassee. After two months of committee meetings leading up to the 2017 Legislative Session, Florida's state senators and representatives formally kicked off this year's session Tuesday, Mar. 7, with Governor Rick Scott's "State of the State" address. In addition to lawmaking, state legislators must approve and pass a budget during the session. Gov. Scott submitted recommendations for early learning in his "[Fighting for Florida's Future](#)" budget that include an \$11.3 million increase for VPK and \$25 million more to serve more children in school readiness.



N-E-W-S

Early learning highlights from North, East, West and South Florida

ELC of Pasco/Hernando to Host Eighth Annual "Storybook Forest"

Event will feature interactive storybook displays to encourage reading

On Saturday, Mar. 25, 2017, the [ELC of Pasco and Hernando](#) will host its eighth annual "Storybook Forest" in celebration of Children's Week in Florida. The free outdoor event will offer families interactive displays and activities based on children's favorite books. Children will also have the opportunity to meet with some of their favorite characters, such as Clifford the Big Red Dog and Curious George. The "Storybook Forest" will take place from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the Crews Lake Wilderness Park in Shady Hills. For more information, [click here](#).



Second Annual 5K Run Supports School Readiness

ELC of Pinellas County's 5K to benefit early learning and literacy

On Saturday, Apr. 1, [the ELC of Pinellas County](#) will host its second annual "Pre-K 5K Readiness Run" in the Boyd Hill Nature Trail & Preserve in St. Petersburg. The 5K will start at 9 a.m. and both adults and children are welcome to run or walk. Following the run will be activities for children and families including the Storybook Village, where community child care providers will be bringing classic books to life. Advance registration for the run is \$20 per person; day-of registration is \$25 per person. There is free child registration for each registered adult. All proceeds will go toward coalition programs serving the children of Pinellas County. For more info or to register, [click here](#).



Orlando Magic Youth Foundation Rewards ELC of Orange County with \$65,000

The funds will go toward the coalition's Infant/Toddler CDA Coaching Program

The [ELC of Orange County](#) received \$65,000 from the Orlando Magic Youth Foundation for the coalition's Infant/Toddler CDA Coaching Program. The program provides infant/toddler training to educators, guiding them through age-appropriate learning experiences as they work toward obtaining their national Child Development Associate credential.



The increased funding this year will support the addition of a new training component to assist infant/toddler teachers and directors in their understanding of age-appropriate positive guidance, cultural competency and trauma-informed care.

Annual Early Educator's Conference Focuses on "Inspiring Curious Minds"

Conference will take place at the Florida Gateway College and feature two keynote speakers

On Saturday, Apr. 8, 2017, the [ELC of Florida's Gateway](#) and Florida Gateway College will host a child care provider conference titled "Inspiring Curious Minds." Pam Phelps and Cynthia Krosky will be the keynote speakers. Early childhood professionals will present additional sessions on inspiring curiosity and learning in young children. The deadline to register for the conference is Mar. 21, 2017. Registration fee is \$3 per person. For more info or to register, [click here](#).



Event Recognizes Early Education Professionals

Honorees successfully completed early education programs

The [ELC of Okaloosa and Walton Counties](#) honored early childhood professionals at the Early Childhood Education Honor's Reception on Mar. 5, 2017. Northwest Florida State College co-sponsored and hosted the reception. Honorees included early childhood educators who earned the Florida Child Care Professional Credential and the Florida Child Care Director Credential.



ELC of Miami-Dade/Monroe Launches "Unplug and Connect" Campaign

Campaign calls on parents to spend more time with their children and less with their mobile devices

The [ELC of Miami-Dade/Monroe's](#) "Unplug and Connect" campaign encourages parents to put down their cell phones and engage with their children.



Increased use of digital devices by parents takes time away from family activities and important one-on-one interactions. Putting away distractions and connecting to your child through conversation, singing and reading activities maximizes brain development and kindergarten readiness. Spending quality time with your child also helps him/her grow emotionally and socially.

Parents can make the pledge to "Unplug and Connect" and find tips and ideas on how to connect through every day moments by visiting www.unplug.elcmdm.org.

ELC of Florida's Gateway to Celebrate Children's Week with Community Event

Local event will offer entertainment for children and resources for families

As part of Children's Week, the [ELC of Florida's Gateway](#) will host Children's Day 2017, a community partnership event on Friday, Mar. 31, from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. at the Memorial Stadium in Lake City. The event will offer children's games, bounce houses, a petting zoo, pony rides and free food. Businesses and community organizations will also be sharing resources with families. [Click here](#) to view the event flyer.



Coalition to Host Annual "Summer Camp Splash" Event

Event is an opportunity for parents to register children for local summer camps

The [ELC of the Big Bend Region](#) will host "Summer Camp Splash" on Saturday, Mar. 18, 2017, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the Pavilion at the Centre of Tallahassee. Over 30 local summer camps have teamed up with the coalition to offer parents an opportunity to preview and register their child for summer camp.

The event will also have activities for the whole family, including raffle prizes, face painting and more.



Contact: Communications, Office of Early Learning
250 Marriott Drive, Tallahassee, FL 32399
866-357-3239

