



## EARLY LEARNING UPDATE

SUMMER 2015

### BUSINESS ALLIANCE PAYS ATTENTION TO EARLY LEARNING

Palm Beach and Escambia counties' early learning coalitions have been working with the business community to focus attention on the connection between high-quality early education and a successful economy. A Tallahassee luncheon before an audience of high-profile business leaders from around the state during Children's Week featured both early learning coalitions with regional business executives highlighting the [importance of early education](#). Shortly after, the [ELC of Escambia County](#) followed that with their third annual [Early Education Summit](#).

### ABOUT THE CHILD CARE RESOURCE AND REFERRAL PROGRAM

Finding quality child care and early education programs is the first step parents can make toward a lifetime of successful learning for their children. The [Child Care Resource and Referral](#) program helps educate and connect families with providers in their community. From financial assistance strategies to special needs programs, CCR&R can help families find programs that best serve their specific needs.

#### Why use CCR&R?

- *The "front door" to all child care, early learning programs and community re-sources for families*
- *Assists families of children with dis-abilities in finding a program that meets their specialized needs*
- *Maintains a database of all legally operating providers so parents can choose a program confidently*
- *Owners of child care businesses are listed in a database of 15,000 providers for referral opportunities*

### JUST THE FACTS

More than 6,500 children in Florida participated in VPK summer programs last 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 [Early Learning Coalition of Orange County](#) is having a big night for children June 13. [The First Five Years Gala](#) will honor champions of early education, while raising money to support the coalition's initiatives. Every dollar raised at the gala will bring in \$15.67 in matching donations.

Educators looking to shake up their methods gathered at the Eighth Annual "A Conference of Our Own" in Tallahassee. The event was put on by the [ELC of the Big Bend Region](#) and offered Pre-K, Family Child Care Home and Infant/Toddler learning tracks.

Early educators gathered to focus on the power of words during the Early Childhood Symposium on April 25. Organized by the [ELC of Alachua County](#), event speakers Angela Fraley and DJ Baptiste presented on “Conscious Discipline,” a method to transform instances of conflict into teachable moments. Creative teachers at the [ELC of Flagler and Volusia](#) convert their front lobby into a “dramatic play” area every month. April’s theme was “Deland Post Office.” Using donated envelopes, junk mail and magazines, kids wrote letters and stamped envelopes to far-flung corners of the world.

STEM teaching is making its way into early learning classrooms across the state. In St. Lucie County, STEM GEMS (Guided Education Mentors) have been educating fellow teachers on standards. In January, the [ELC of St. Lucie](#) initiated the program in 10 centers, with 18 participating teachers. Now, those core participants are GEMS, who are teaching it to providers throughout the region.

On June 20, the [ELC of the Big Bend Region](#) will host “Fun Science Day,” a workshop to increase science’s role in the classroom through easy experiments and engaging projects that adhere to STEM standards.

Many early learning coalitions organized events for 2015’s Children’s Week. The [ELC of Duval County](#) held a child advocacy walk through downtown Jacksonville on March 19. The [ELC of Miami Dade](#) brought storybook fun to the Miami Children’s Museum as children dressed up in their favorite costumes. And the [ELC of Palm Beach County](#) held reading events throughout the area with local mayors visiting child care centers to read classic stories.

Child care providers were celebrated, nationwide, on May 8 for [Provider Appreciation Day](#). Coalitions across the state recognized the dedication of these educators. One event, by the [ELC of Pasco and Hernando](#), brought together more than 50 early learning specialists, administrators and education leaders to highlight this invaluable work.

In April, OEL Deputy Director Stephanie Gehres joined First Lady Ann Scott and DOE Commissioner Pam Stewart in wearing blue to draw attention to *Prevent Child Abuse Month*.