



5,353 children received services at 243 different early learning programs in any given month.

Children who are ready for kindergarten are best prepared for success upon entry into formal educational programming. School Readiness funding is offered to income-eligible and other qualifying families to provide financial supports to children and families. To prepare children for kindergarten, School Readiness offers developmental screening and an age-appropriate curriculum with a focus on high quality care and education.

In part, the mission of the ELC is to "enhance the quality of children's lives". The ability to enroll children in School Readiness programs fulfills an important aspect of this mission and is particularly satisfying in support of children, families, and the employers of Southwest Florida.

## Early Childhood Specialists

The Early Childhood Specialists have conducted over **250** provider training sessions and technical visits; conducted **397** assessments; provided one-on-one coaching support for teachers; and supported providers in implementing best practices around Lee, Collier, Glades and Hendry Counties.

The ECS team supported and coached over **366** providers using the web-based statewide data system, Florida's Early Learning Provider Services Portal, where they completed the Provider Profile and their SR/VPK contracts.



Child Care Resource and Referral



Child Care Resource & Referral is a non-income-based free service which helps families find quality childcare. CCR&R also assists families in choosing before and after school programs or summer education programs.

We received **12,302** requests for child care information from families regarding School Readiness, Voluntary Prekindergarten and child care services.



The Voluntary Prekindergarten Program (VPK) is free for all Florida families. In 2002, Florida voters approved a ballot initiative for a high-quality prekindergarten program for every 4-year old (and sometimes 5-year olds).

There are no income requirements to attend up to 540 hours of preschool during the regular school year, or 300 hours of summertime preschool. The VPK program helps preschool children get ready for kindergarten - the start of their education journey.

**7,464** children attended **260** different VPK programs in our 4-county region.

## Grant Funding

The Child Care Stabilization Subgrant Program was authorized by Congress through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA). States received funding to provide direct assistance to eligible child care providers to support their financial stability and offset unexpected costs associated with the COVID-19 pandemic. Florida's program is designed to help stabilize providers now, support them to make strategic investments in their employees and programs, and to reward high quality and participation in the School Readiness Program, with an emphasis on directing higher rates of support to high quality programs in an area with a childcare infrastructure deficit (desert).

The Division of Early Learning (DEL) is overseeing the Child Care Stabilization Subgrant Program in partnership with the Early Learning Coalitions (ELCs)/Redlands Christina Migrant Association (RCMA) throughout the State. ELCs will review applications to verify eligibility, confirm tax information, approve applications for payment, and issue payments to providers.

The following provider types (meeting all requirements) were eligible to receive grant funding:

- Licensed Family Home
- Licensed Family Child Care Homes (FCCH), including Large FCCHs Licensed-Exempt
- Family Home Registered Family Day Care Homes
- Licensed Center Licensed Child Care Facilities
- Licensed-Exempt Center Exempt Child Care Centers, including Religious
- School District Sites



## Literacy Buddy Program

The Literacy Buddy Program works with volunteers to provide books to 3, 4 & 5 year old children in preschools overseen by our coalition. The program also encourages children to take their first steps toward reading and writing by corresponding with their adult volunteer. The books provided by the volunteer are for the child to keep. The exchange of books and letters happens three times during the school year.

**1,053** children wrote letters to **847** adult volunteers to tell them about their interests and received a total of **3,159** books.

We welcomed corporate participation into this program. Employers such as Herc Rentals, Humana, and Hertz understand the importance of early literacy.

## Inclusion

Warm Line  
866-863-1366

Inclusion Warm Line is a free support, information and referral service for families of children with special needs or disabilities in our 4-county region.

The Inclusion Coordinator is available for on-site environmental technical assistance, educational support for programming, teacher and challenging behavior observations.



Our Inclusion Coordinator provided technical assistance to community child care providers and teachers through **320** phone conferences, **267** email & **23** on-site connections; **38** observations, **42** collaborative conferences with other agencies, and **409** family conferences.

## Professional Development

Our coalition recognizes that professional development is an important component of quality early care and education for young children. The State of Florida has adopted the Florida Core Competencies for Early Care and Education Practitioners. The program defines a set of knowledge and skill standards that are necessary for those who work directly with children. We support that effort by offering a variety of training opportunities. In fiscal year 2020 - 2021, **1066** teachers participated in **40** virtual trainings.

The qualifications for Lead VPK instructors and VPK Directors have been strengthened to encourage quality in the program. VPK Directors are required to take an additional 5 courses and Lead VPK instructors are required to take 15 hours of emergent literacy courses as well as the newest Florida Standards for Pre-Kindergarten Classrooms, 3 yrs old through Kindergarten. These qualifications must be met before a contract can be signed. The reimbursement rates for providers who offer VPK have also increased.





## ELC Leadership Message



Dear Friends,

The 2021–2022-year was notable due to the waning pandemic and continuing changes within the early learning community. While most of us grew tired of the constant uncertainties, our early learning programs continued to meet the needs of SWFL children and families. We are grateful for these efforts!

Highlights of the year included implementation of new literacy requirements for those teaching Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK), preparation for program assessment in VPK programs, and keeping pace with the growing needs for childcare, especially for children under the age of three. With the assistance of the Florida Legislature, funding to support childcare subsidy (School Readiness) increased, allowing our coalition’s ability to enroll more children than ever. During this year, we found new childcare partners to provide School Readiness services, helping us to meet that need. As SWFL continues to grow at a rapid rate, the challenge of ensuring the availability of high-quality early learning programs is a high priority for our coalition. Our hat is off to the caring community of early learning professionals who continue to serve our community during changing times.

Throughout the year, the ELC team stayed busy distributing grants to providers designed to support early learning programs struggling to maintain their operations as child attendance ebbed and flowed throughout the year. Using the online portal, staff assisted many families seeking help to find childcare. No matter how the ELC staff are tested, they rise to accomplish the important work behind the scenes to help families and early learning programs. Thank you to the ELC team for your focus on moving us closer to our mission of “enhancing the quality of children’s lives”!

At the center of our organization is our board of directors. Zoom has become a regular part of the meeting experience which allows members from all over our large service delivery area to be regular, active participants in the governance of our agency. Thank you for your continuing support and commitment to serving our community through your volunteer efforts at the Coalition.

Are you interested in getting involved? See our website for more information. We would love to hear from you!

Susan E. Block, Ed.M.  
Chief Executive Officer

Marshall Bower, Esq.  
Interim Board Chair

## Community Connections

Connections to our community are key to our success! These valuable partnerships include:



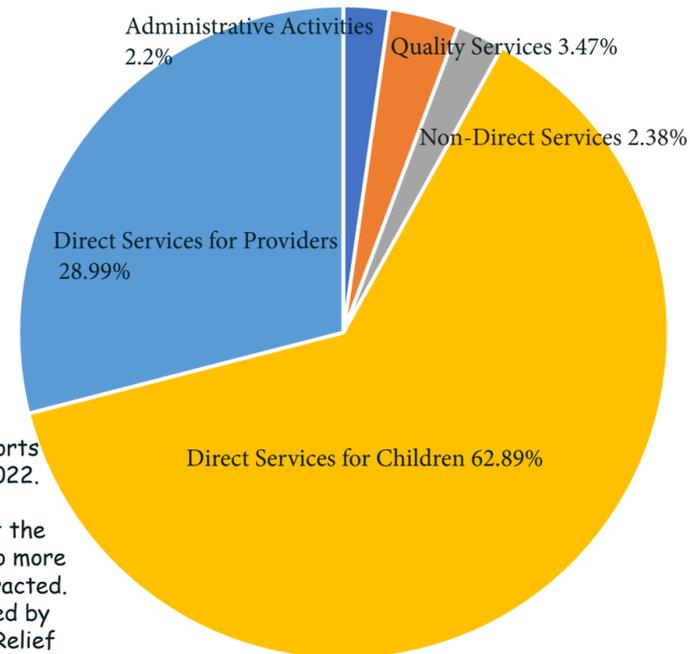
- Futuremakers Coalition
- Florida Prepaid
- Pinwheels for Prevention
- PNC Bank
- Future Ready Collier
- Harry Chapin Food Bank
- Kiwanis
- Chambers of Commerce
- Greater Dunbar Initiative Partners

- Lee County Public Schools
- Collier County Public Schools
- Hendry County Public Schools
- Glades County Public Schools
- Early Steps
- Healthy Start
- United Way of Lee, Glades, & Hendry Counties
- United Way of Collier County

## 2021 - 2022 Fiscal Year

### Details of Expenditures

Administrative Activities:	\$1,558,410
Quality Services:	\$2,381,291
Nondirect Services:	\$1,629,170
Direct Services for Children:	\$43,099,212
Direct Services for Providers:	\$19,865,589
<b>Total:</b>	<b>\$68,533,672</b>



The Early Learning Coalition of SWFL budget supports the SR/VPK program for the fiscal year of 2021-2022. During this fiscal year, the ELC received additional federal funds to sustain the community throughout the pandemic. These funds were directly distributed to more than 400 providers, both contracted and non-contracted. The method for disseminating the funds was defined by direct guidance for the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations (CRRSA) and the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA)

### 2021-2022 Board Members

**Marshall Bower** - Interim Board Chair, *The Foundation for Lee County Public Schools*  
**Doug Szabo** – Board Vice-Chair, *Henderson, Franklin, Starnes & Holt, P.A*  
**Brooke Delmotte** – Board Treasurer, *Early Steps/ Health Planning Council*  
**Selina Jefferson** - Board Secretary, *Mount Hermon Ministries/Dew of Hermon Early Learning Center*

**Jeff Alluri** - *Element Technologies, LLC*  
**Dr. Alice Barfield** - *Glades County School District*  
**Rita Dellatore** – *Kid City Early Learning Academy, LLC*  
**Nate Halligan** - *Charlotte State Bank & Trust*  
**Jason Himschoot** – *Maughan, Himschoot & Adams Law Group*  
**Michele King** – *Golisano Children’s Hospital of Southwest Florida*  
**Dr. Beth McBride** - *Collier County School District*  
**Roger Mercado** – *Lee County Human and Veteran Services*  
**Jim Palmer** - *Department of Children and Families*  
**Joe Paterno** - *CareerSource SWFL*  
**Kimberly Ross** – *Ross Dynasty Cares*  
**Dr. Kelly Roy** - *Florida Southwestern State College*  
**Char-Nequa Smith** - *Florida Department of Health, Lee County*

Susan Block, Ed. M.  
Chief Executive Officer  
Ex Officio



# EARLY LEARNING COALITION OF SOUTHWEST FLORIDA



## Annual Report 2021 - 2022

*Nurturing the young children of Southwest Florida and those who care for them!*

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