

## SPRING, 2024 NEWSLETTER

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# A message from our CEO

I cannot believe it is May already! This year is flying by quickly.

### *WELCOME*

I am delighted to extend a warm welcome to our new Chief Financial Officer, Richard "Rick" Cocchieri. Rick brings with him a wealth of experience and expertise, and we are excited to have him join our team. Rick has extensive nonprofit financial management experience and a passion for our nonprofit mission of supporting quality, accessible early childhood education. Rick is a valuable addition to our leadership team. His dedication to fiscal responsibility and strategic planning will undoubtedly contribute to the continued success of our coalition. Please join us in welcoming Rick to our early learning community.

### *ARPA GRANT*

The American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) has provided critical funding to support early childhood education and care initiatives in our region. We are pleased to report that our coalition has been actively working to allocate these funds to projects that will have a meaningful impact on the children and families we serve. From expanding access to high-quality childcare to enhancing professional development opportunities for early educators, we are committed to maximizing the benefits of ARPA funding for our community. Stay tuned for updates on our progress in the coming months.

### *LEGISLATION*

The 2024 legislative session in Florida has been marked by important discussions and decisions regarding early childhood education policy. Our coalition has been closely monitoring these developments and advocating for policies that prioritize the needs of young children and their families. While progress has been made in some areas, there is still work to be done to ensure that every child in our state has access to the quality early

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learning experiences they deserve, and every provider is adequately compensated for their investment in early childhood education. We will continue to engage with policymakers and stakeholders to advance the policies that support the healthy development of our youngest learners.

### ADVOCATE

I invite you to join me in advocating for our mission to support early childhood education and care in Southwest Florida. Whether you're a parent, educator, policymaker, or community member, there are many ways to get involved and make a difference. From volunteering your time to advocating for policy change, your support is vital to our success. Together, we can create a brighter future for our children and our community.

Thank you for your continued support of the Early Learning Coalition of Southwest Florida. We look forward to partnering with you to create positive change in the lives of children and families throughout our region.



**Melanie M. Stefanowicz, Ed.D.**  
**CEO, Early Learning Coalition of SWFL**

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Good news on the horizon for parents/guardians of young children. Thanks to new legislation, certain fees have decreased. ELC CEO, Dr. Melanie Stefanowicz was interviewed about what it all means.

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