



EARLY LEARNING
COALITION
OF SOUTHWEST FLORIDA

News from The Early Learning Coalition SWFL

Spring, 2023
Here's what's happening at the ELC

[Visit our Website](#)

Hello-Goodbye Open House *Honoring Achievements*

In April, we said farewell to our long-time CEO, Susan Block. Susan led our coalition for 10 years and oversaw the many transitions we faced. Her dedication to the children and families of Southwest Florida will be remembered.

We welcome Dr. Melanie Stefanowicz as our incoming CEO. She has a long history of involvement in education issues in Florida- most recently as the Associate Superintendent of Career and Technical Education at the Orange County Public School System.



Susan Block at the ELC Open House



At the ELC Open House- food & fun!



Susan Block passes the baton to Dr. Melanie Stefanowicz.

Preschool Providers Honored *Congratulations!*

In March, (l-r) Deanna Campbell and Mary Wildman were honored at the 3rd Annual **North Fort Myers Civic Association's** Community Service Awards Program. Ms. Campbell, the owner of Deanna's Country Kids accepted the Diamond Award for the North Fort Myers Female of Distinction category. Mary Wildman, owner of Mis. Mary's Day Care was also a finalist. The Association holds this event to thank those in the North Fort Myers community for their support and distinguished service in



Nice to See You! *Southward Village*

Our ELC joined other community organizations in March at Southward Village in Fort Myers. Parents learned about the **Voluntary Prekindergarten** and **School Readiness** Programs, while children had fun coloring the giant mural.



Teacher Appreciation Week *Thanks!*

Can you think back and remember a teacher who played a big part in your life? Did they motivate, inspire, or listen to you when it was important? May 8 - 12, 2023 we celebrated **Teacher Appreciation Week**. This month, you might take some time to find out what your child's teacher needs for their classroom, or offer to volunteer in some way.



Provider Appreciation Day *More Now Than Ever*

May 12, 2023 we celebrated **Provider Appreciation Day**. This is the day set aside during National Teacher's Week to honor those energetic teachers who set our little one's feet onto the path of learning. Basic concepts, socialization, and emotional development allow preschoolers to successfully take their place in kindergarten. If you have a child in preschool, we hope you take some time to say thank-you.



On the Air *Pushing the Early Ed Message*

Our CEO, Dr. Melanie Stefanowicz has been spreading the word about the value of getting your 4- or 5-year old child registered for Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK). It's free, and can help get children kindergarten ready.

[Watch it here.](#)

On the Air *ABC-7 Interview*



Dr. Stefanowicz joined P.A. Geraci teacher Ciara Addison on Provider Appreciation Day to talk about how early education teachers set the stage for learning. [Watch it here.](#)



Play Ball ! *Teachers get a Night Out*

Fort Myers' **Mighty Mussels** baseball team invited teachers to relax while taking in a game on May 12 - Preschool Providers Appreciation Day! The night was capped by fireworks at the stadium.

The event was an opportunity to gather and celebrate with fellow teachers and other providers, and to enjoy a fun night of baseball. Thank-you, Mighty Mussels!

Congratulations to 2023 VPK Grads *Kindergarten Bound!*

Congratulations to Florida's Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) 2022- 2023 program year graduates!

Florida's VPK program has served more than 2.6 million Florida children since its inception in 2005-2006. [The Division of Early Learning's](#) website has resources to help all of Florida's youngest learners and their families get the best start on a successful school career.



ARPA Grants *Grant Money for Preschools*

With **American Rescue Plan Act** funding (ARPA) awarded to the ELC from the **Lee County Board of County Commissioners** (BOCC), [Deana's Country Kids](#), among others, received a grant award to make significant improvements to its playground.

Having access to a safe, engaging, and fun environment helps children learn social skills, motor skills, and develop their cognitive thinking strategies. We are grateful for the partnership with the Lee County BOCC that allows us to help our providers create phenomenal learning opportunities for our community's children.



Looking Forward

Greetings Early Childhood Education Advocates,

We bid farewell to the Early Learning Coalition of Southwest Florida's long-tenured CEO, Susan Block, as she begins her



retirement journey. For over three decades, Susan has been an integral part of the early childhood education community, both here in Florida, and in New York. During her tenure as CEO, she has implemented several innovative programs and initiatives that have positively impacted families. As we say goodbye to Ms. Block, we would like to express our heartfelt gratitude for her dedication and contributions to early childhood education and the children of Southwest Florida.

I was able to work side-by-side with Susan for several weeks before she left and am honored to have had the opportunity to learn from her depth of experience around early childhood education. Personally, I have been in the educational field for 20 years in a variety of capacities, from teaching 9th and 10th grade English to district-level administrative positions, most recently in an Associate Superintendent role. My area of expertise is in adult education and career and technical education. My focus over the past 10 years has been providing educational pathways to the parents of the children served by early childhood educators.

Strong relationships with stakeholders are critical to building effective programs and I believe that collaboration and communication are key to achieving the best outcomes for the children of our community. I plan to make stakeholder engagement a priority. To that end, in addition to visiting providers individually, I am planning regional Town Hall meetings to meet teachers, directors, and community members to learn your thoughts, ideas, and concerns.

As I begin planning for provider visits and Town Hall meetings, I am interested in learning your preferences around in-person Town Hall meetings versus virtual meetings. If you are a preschool provider, please take a minute to complete this [quick 6 question survey](#) to help inform my planning. In the meantime, please don't hesitate to contact me if I can be of service.

I look forward to meeting you and working with you!

Dr. Melanie Stefanowicz , CEO
Early Learning Coalition SWFL

You may contact Dr. Stefanowicz at Melanie.Stefanowicz@elcofswfl.org

[Early Learning Coalition of Southwest Florida](#)
(239) 935-6100 | ELCofSWFL.org

STAY CONNECTED WITH THE EARLY LEARNING COALITION OF SWFL



Early Learning Coalition of Southwest Florida | 2675 Winkler Ave. #300, Fort Myers, FL 33901

[Unsubscribe jane.hess@elcofswfl.org](mailto:jane.hess@elcofswfl.org)

[Constant Contact Data Notice](#)

Sent by jane.hess@elcofswfl.org powered by



Try email marketing for free today!