



**Early
Learning
Coalition**
OF SOUTHWEST FLORIDA

EARLY LEARNING COALITION OF SWFL

FALL NEWSLETTER

www.elcofswfl.org

239-935-6100

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- **It's Family Engagement Month!**

A Message From Our CEO



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

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

As we approach the holiday season, we reflect on the accomplishments and resilience of our coalition this fall. The commitment from our providers, staff, and community partners is truly inspiring, and we're excited to share some highlights from this past quarter!

Coming Soon: A Fresh New Look for the Coalition

Exciting things are on the horizon! We're thrilled to announce that the Early Learning Coalition will soon unveil a fresh new brand identity, complete with a vibrant logo that reflects our mission and values. This rebranding effort is designed to increase recognition of our organization and amplify community awareness of our work to support families and children across Southwest Florida. Stay tuned for the official reveal, as we look forward to a look that embodies our commitment to quality early learning and connects us more deeply with the communities we serve.

A Successful Town Hall and Increased Community Engagement

In October, we hosted a last-minute Town Hall meeting with over 100 child care providers across Southwest Florida to share important updates following Hurricanes Helene and Milton. This event, planned quickly by our dedicated team, gave providers a platform to discuss challenges, brainstorm solutions, and share resources in the wake of these storms. We're incredibly grateful for the collaborative spirit of our providers and the innovative ideas that have come out of this gathering.

Progress in Professional Development

This fall, our coalition achieved several professional development milestones that are vital to the growth and success of our educators. We've rolled out new training programs focusing on resiliency, trauma-informed care, and early literacy. Our educators have shown an unwavering dedication to professional growth, and these new initiatives aim to support them as they foster strong foundations in our children's development.

Advocacy Wins

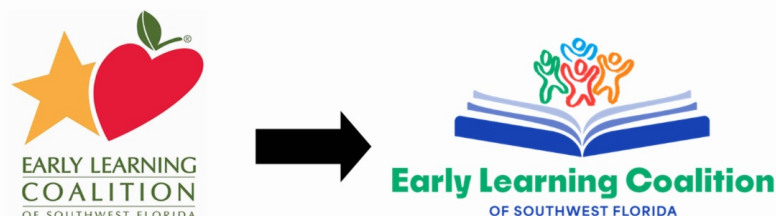
Our advocacy efforts remain strong as we approach the end of 2024. In collaboration with local chambers, business partners, and policymakers, we've continued our push to expand the recent tax credit for employers who support employee access to quality child care. This initiative aims to create a stronger, more stable workforce by making child care more affordable for working families. We are grateful for the momentum this legislation is gaining and look forward to further progress.

Expanding Access: VPK and School Readiness

This season, we've seen a surge in applications for Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) and School Readiness programs. This increase underscores the demand and importance of early learning access across Southwest Florida, and we're committed to meeting that demand. In addition, our partnerships with local organizations, such as the FutureMakers and Future Ready Collier, are helping to spread the word and enhance resources for families who need it most.

A Season for Giving Back

As we enter the season of giving, we invite our community to join us in supporting early learning. Whether through donations, volunteer opportunities, or simply spreading awareness, your involvement makes a tangible difference. Together, we can give our children a brighter future and strengthen the foundation of early education in our region. Thank you for being a part of our journey and for all you do to support early learning in Southwest Florida. We wish you a wonderful holiday season filled with joy, peace, and community!



New Look

After 25 years - it's time for a re-fresh! Florida's Early Learning Coalitions were created 25 years ago, and our old logo dates to that time period. Here's a sneak peek at our new logo, which will officially be unveiled later this year, along with an updated and streamlined website. Stay tuned!

Hurricanes

Hurricanes [Helene](#) and [Milton](#) made life miserable for thousands of Floridians as they came ashore just two weeks apart in late September and early October. Out of an abundance of caution, Early Learning Coalition Offices, and preschools in the affected areas closed for a number of days as the storms neared landfall.

After the storm, one preschool in our 4-county area sustained a foot of water intrusion, and another received

roof damage from a tornado. Many stayed closed until power could be restored.

The ELC, through the [Florida Division of Early Learning](#) assisted preschools in need by easing protocols and helping to navigate regulations so that schools could reopen as soon as possible.



Hurricane Milton makes landfall near Sarasota October 9, 2024.

Family Engagement Month

November is Family Engagement Month. Studies show families are engaged when they partner with early learning programs that foster positive relationships. Parents who regularly interact with their child increase the child's motivation to learn, and improve school readiness skills.

[Download this document](#) to see all the ways you can partner with your child's early learning center.

To learn how to select a quality preschool, check out [our website](#).



Michael Aguiar & Sesia Dominguez at the Books, Balls & Blocks event in October.

Community

We love getting out into the community - especially when we partner with another great organization: Help Me Grow, Florida! The Books, Balls & Blocks event was held at the downtown Fort Myers Library in October. Parents were directed on how to complete the [Ages & Stages Questionnaire](#) - a screening tool that pinpoints developmental progress in children aged 1 month to 5 1/2 years.

ELC staff were on hand to talk about the Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) Program, and distributed books and other materials to help parents connect with their children and make learning fun!

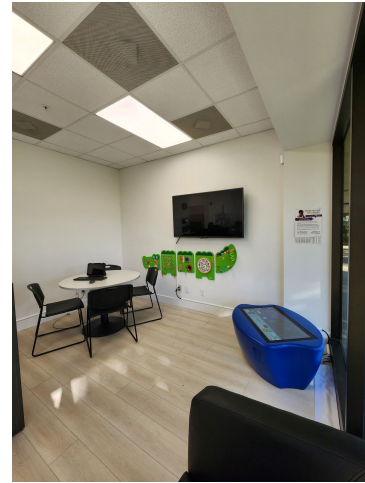
[Help Me Grow, FL](#)

New Naples Office

Bright, clean, welcoming - some of the adjectives that may come to mind as you enter the new location of the ELC offices in Naples. With new décor and plenty of activities for children, it's a bright, welcoming space for families. The **new office** is just across from the original: 3050 North Horseshoe Drive, Unit 168 Naples, FL 34104

If you're in the area during business hours, stop by, check it out, say hello!

[Map](#)



GET HELP FOR CHILD CARE COSTS.

The Early Learning Coalition of SWFL is ready to help eligible families pay for child care! Find out if your family qualifies for the School Readiness Program at www.elcofswfl.org.



School Readiness

Florida's School Readiness Programs can help ease the burden of child care costs for families that qualify. The Early Learning Coalition of SWFL can assist in submitting your application through the Florida Early Learning [Family Portal](#).

Make an appointment, or stop by our offices to see if your family can take advantage of this program.

[Information on School Readiness](#)

Parents' Pages

There's lots to find out about in the November edition of the Florida Division of Early Learning's Parents' Pages. Check it out!

[November Parents' Pages](#)



Children's Week 2025

Save the Date! Children's Week Florida will be held April 13 - 18, 2025. This annual event, which marks its 30th year, is centered in Tallahassee, and aims to keep children's issues top-of-mind for our Florida legislators. Learn more at [Children's Week 2025](#)

Business Hours in November

Our offices will be closed to the public on the following days:

Nov. 11: Veterans Day

Nov. 21: In-service Day

Nov. 27 - 29: Thanksgiving Break



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

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