



MISSION: The Early Learning Coalition prepares children for lifelong success through quality early learning.

VISION: Every child develops a strong foundation of learning in a community dedicated to ensuring all families have the necessary support to thrive and all children reach their full potential.

PURPOSE: The Early Learning Coalition provides administration and oversight of the local, integrated system of early education for preschool age children in Sarasota County, ensuring quality childcare and early learning programs, family access to services, and positive outcomes for young children, ages 0-5. The ELC serves over 4000 children and assists 170 providers annually.

BACKGROUND/HISTORY: The Early Learning Coalition of Sarasota County was originally incorporated in May 2000 as a result of legislation, as the School Readiness Coalition of Sarasota County, Inc., and a 501 (c) (3) non-profit organization.

Legislation regarding School Readiness and the Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten continues to outline the responsibilities for Early Learning Coalitions across the state including oversight for the delivery of local early education services to improve the quality of local child care sites and support school readiness outcomes for all children. It also establishes thresholds for spending categories, including an administrative cap of 5%, and determines the composition of its Board of Directors.

Our local Coalition currently administers a program of \$14 million of local, state and federal funds that are used to:

- Facilitate and oversee a wide range of services to enhance the overall system of quality child care and preschool educational programs for young children in Sarasota County
- Provide child care financial scholarships to local income-eligible families so they have access to high quality care to support positive development and outcomes for their children
- Manage the Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten Program (VPK) available for all four year-olds to increase the readiness of children to begin Kindergarten
- Administer the community's *Look for the Stars* quality rating program for child care, a 5 star rating system; provide corresponding support, coaching and training for early care teachers
- Manage a local "Literacy Buddy" program using volunteers to correspond with young children through books, letters and drawings and facilitate a program placing "Bucket of Books" within waiting areas of local businesses
- Offer variety of resources for parents, including educational materials on child development, early literacy, developmental screening, and support for parents being their child's first teacher
- Educate the community regarding importance of investments in early learning

The Early Learning Coalition reports to Florida's Division of Early Learning. A Board of Directors governs the Coalition and ensures compliance with statutory requirements and a high quality of services. The Chair and two of the private sector business representatives are appointed by the Governor, other Board members are community leaders, educators, child care professionals, and local business representatives, all dedicated to ensuring that Sarasota's young children are given the strong foundation they need to succeed in school.

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