



ANNUAL REPORT

FY 2023-2024

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

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EVALUATION OF DIRECT ENHANCEMENT SERVICES

Evaluation of Direct Enhancement Services

COMPREHENSIVE CONSUMER EDUCATION

Describe how the Coalition developed, established, expanded, operated, and coordinated resource and referral programs specifically related to the provision of comprehensive consumer education to parents and the public to promote informed child care choices.

The Early Learning Coalition of Sarasota County educates children, empowers families and elevates providers. We work diligently to increase mission awareness among community members, volunteers, local leaders and funders. Ensuring families have access to high-quality early care and education, we connect them with our services as well as additional resources they need to thrive. We support early educators with the tools, essential resources and professional development they need to implement and maintain enriching, high-quality classroom environments, thereby supporting the families they serve directly.

Over the last year, our community outreach efforts continue to soar, bolstering stronger family connections and creating new, innovative agency partnerships. Intentionality and strategy took center stage when deciding on our participation in existing community events and/or hosting our own events. Our laser focus remains on a 2Gen approach and targeting hard-to-reach pockets across Sarasota County. Of course, we continued to use our digital platforms, especially social media, to deepen connections and enhance engagement with our parents and community-at-large.

2023-2024 Highlights

- We onboarded, guided and mentored Sarasota County Schools as they prepared to launch VPK in the district for the first time, providing them with the necessary training and information to succeed in the 2024-2025 school year and beyond.
- We are officially operating as the first Florida ELC to have a freestanding, independent, Registered Apprenticeship Program, without a collegiate umbrella. A unique and unprecedented designation given to us by the Florida Department of Education. Given the pent-up demand, we immediately have over 20 applicant and participants for the program. We've promoted this incredible accomplishment and plan to continue our campaign in fall to make sure teachers know of this opportunity. This initiative will boost future recruitment and retention of preschool educators in our community. We have been preliminary approved to offer the FCCPC and once final, all of the apprenticeship and training services will be in house.
- Our Pre-Apprenticeship program continues to thrive. Now operating under our new Registered Apprenticeship Program designation, also received this year, participant enrollment remains strong and steady. Our Pre-Apprenticeship program is a free, ELC-led DCF 40-hour training course coupled with one-on-one mentoring, professionalism workshop, interviewing skills, job placement assistance and career navigation.

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- At our Business Breakfast in November 2023, the Coalition announced the formation of an ELC Childcare Business Task Force—a council of dedicated individuals from various sectors poised to analyze current challenges, identify innovative strategies, and implement actionable plans to increase childcare capacity. With its primary focus on addressing the crisis in south county, the task force aims to make a substantial impact where the need is most profound. Since its inception, we now have 17 “expansion” projects in the pipeline that range from newly built brick and mortar space to opening new classrooms at existing sites. We plan to keep the momentum going in 2024-2025 as we work diligently to expand childcare openings and options not only in south Sarasota County, but throughout our community.
- We renovated and refreshed our ELC lobby—adding more kid-friendly features, new furniture, educational toys, books for children to enjoy while they wait. New additions include bilingual door decals and indoor signage featuring QR code signs encouraging parents to connect with us on social media and our website to stay informed about their childcare choices.
- We resurrected our Provider Conference in January 2024 after taking a 4-year COVID hiatus. We offered 15 different professional development workshops to 300 attendees including directors and teachers. The focus was Teacher-Child interactions. Due to its overwhelming success, we will continue to host this annual event. (see also teacher training part of this report)
- We customized and co-branded nearly 1,000 new FLIP It Books in collaboration with Devereux. They serve as easy-to-follow, impactful guides for parents regarding a young child’s challenging behavior. It reinforces the fact that the ELC is a great resource for their child’s challenging behavior through CCRR services. We distribute them at outreach events, teacher training workshops and all warmline visits.
- We continue to update our ELC website to include more detailed information regarding CLASS scores, our large-scale community literacy events, our free Preschool Teacher Training program and FCCPC opportunities. We also continue to promote popular parent-focused websites including www.growingmindsread.org and www.lookforthestars.org
- Our 4th annual Storybook Street event was once again a smashing success. Our FREE, literacy-meets-the-arts extravaganza featured 20 local arts and science agencies who bring books to life. With more than 1,300 people in attendance, we distributed more than 6,600 books in 2 hours. Each family walked away with 20 new books. The event elevates our profile and increases our brand awareness throughout the county as the primary resource for all things early education.
- We hit another homerun with our second annual Kindergarten Round-Up events working with Sarasota County Schools. As we continue to strengthen our partnership with the district, together we hosted one event in north county and another in south county, ensuring access to all area families. 375 people, including nearly 100 incoming kindergartners, attended these free “parties” which were open to ALL incoming kindergartners entering public or charter schools in August 2024. ELC CCRR specialists were onsite assisting younger siblings in accessing childcare and VPK. Funded by two local foundations, the events were part of

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Suncoast Remake Learning Days—a free, 10-day regional learning festival with a specific 2Gen approach.

- We continued our successful “High-CLASS Provider” awareness campaign where we award providers, scoring a CLASS composite score of 5.5 or higher, with a new, blue, vinyl banner touting their high-quality. The campaign includes both centers and family childcare homes and the banners are hung outside each awarded site. This initiative boosts public visibility and community awareness on identifying high-quality care.
- Thanks to the generous donations from Junior League of Sarasota and the Florida Winefest & Auction, we will be relaunching our Bucket of Books program in late 2024. COVID decimated the literacy program as we had 120 buckets filled with children’s books placed in business waiting rooms across the county. Now, with the help of our community, we can start from scratch with new books and new buckets. This program gives us another layer of parent education and community awareness to a hard-to-reach demographic.
- We rolled into our third year of *Read Learn Dream (RLD)*, a fast-growing early literacy program in collaboration with the Siesta Key Kiwanis Club. Funded by the Club, and co-created with the ELC, we partner together to help build strong home libraries for area 4-year-olds. RLD provided nearly 200 participating VPK children with one or two books per month for the entire school year. With a parent-centric approach, every book distribution includes bilingual (Spanish) reading tip stickers in every book and provides a bilingual list of simple, fun, book-themed home activities.
- We continued our use of a virtual, human services platform called Unite Us, that is widely used within our community. The site allows us to receive childcare referrals from social service agencies across the region. It also allows us to continue the referral process for that same client if they need other services. This also enhanced our visibility in the community to both receive and send referrals.
- ELC continues to partner with our local workforce to not only ensure their clients are informed and connected with our services, but we participate in their local Crosswalk system which connects individuals referred with a variety of services and allows for greater coordination among partners.
- ELC brochures and informational folders were provided directly to numerous local nonprofits including Mothers Helping Mothers, Jewish Family & Children’s Services, Healthy Start Coalition, CenterPlace Health, More Too Life, First 1,000 Days, Sarasota County Libraries and various city social services agencies. Folders included CCR&R literature, VPK, Quality Checklist, local QRIS 5-star rating program, literacy programs, special events, and more.
- Sending regular email communications to providers with information, training, and resources, we also held weekly virtual Directors’ Connection meetings. Primarily serving as peer-to-peer support for Directors, Director’s Connection always integrates parent outreach, ensuring families know of all resources available through the coalition.

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- We continued to carve out new community collaborations, attending numerous back-to-school events, kid's safety events, children's festivals, and community baby showers. In addition to brochures and flyers featuring childcare resources, we also distributed materials regarding early literacy, milestones, mental health, special needs and developmental screenings.
- We kicked off the 17th year of our local QRIS 5-star quality rating program called *Look for the Stars* (LFTS). Refining and enhancing the assessment system to incorporate CLASS composite scores, we continue to weigh assessments, screenings, teacher trainings and qualifications. LFTS is based on voluntary provider participation and serves as an accurate and effective tool to parents seeking quality care in Sarasota County. The program is at the heart of our family engagement and parent education efforts overall.
- We continued participation in pop-up laundry and literacy events with the Suncoast Campaign for Grade-Level Reading (SCGLR) proved to be super impactful for ELC mission outreach. The boots-on-the-ground initiative, funded by SCGLR, selects a laundromat located in an impoverished community, pays for all laundry costs of patrons and makes early literacy resources available for children on-site. Read aloud sessions are coupled with book giveaways to help build home libraries.
- To educate our community on the existence and meaning of CLASS scores, we continued to run a multi-tiered digital/TV campaign with both WFLA TV and WWSB TV. The OTT campaign included a 30 second commercial on CLASS scores. All clicks go to our ELC website where we have created a new page dedicated to explaining CLASS assessments and scores. The page also features a PDF of current composite scores.
- CCR&R information and assistance was offered to families in both English and Spanish at a variety of outdoor or drive-thru outreach events including Health Start. We also distributed brochures and flyers about additional resources outside of childcare (early literacy, milestones, mental health, special needs and developmental screenings)
- Scoring great media coverage throughout the year, the ELC continues to be featured in a positive light in various print, radio and TV platforms. Stories range from access to early education and the creation of our Childcare Business Task Force to our free family literacy events and unique kindergarten round-up parties. We have also made several appearances on a morning talk show called *Suncoast View*.
- Our Outreach team still attends community job fairs, promoting and recruiting candidates for our Pre-Apprenticeship program, targeting new individuals coming into the field. One of our main target demographics continues to be parents with young children, high school youth as well as individuals suitable for entry level positions, who may not realize that childcare and early education can be a career.
- With incredible results from our first three years, we rolled into our fourth year of *LENA Grow*, reaching nearly 120 children. The tech-savvy, classroom-based language and literacy program comes with a wonderful parent component. LENA provides a take-home packet to engage parents by offering tips on conversation starters and showing them ways to increase words and "turns" when talking, reading and singing with their children.

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- We continued to make big and bold changes to our marketing and community outreach materials through local foundation funding, grant opportunities and ARPA dollars. We created new, bilingual (Spanish/English) brochures, flyers and pop-up banners. We placed custom CRRR messaging on pens, signage, bags, notepads, yard signs, etc. We designed and printed new Spanish/English VPK rack cards providing details through easy and convenient QR codes.
- Through a series of mini training sessions, we continued to educate local businesses, community partners and referring agencies on updated info regarding the scope of CRRR services and other ELC resources. Agencies include Sarasota Medical Pregnancy Center, Safe Children’s Coalition, Healthy Start Coalition, Venice Chamber of Commerce, Sarasota Chamber of Commerce, Literacy Council, Siesta Key Kiwanis, North Port Forward, Little Medical School, Multicultural Health Institute, Glasser/Schoenbaum Human Service Campus, CenterPlace Health, Unidos Now, Sisterhood For Good, and more.
- Another record-breaking year for our *Literacy Buddy* program as we served 580 children. Thanks to 300 dedicated volunteers, our Pen-Pal book-exchange program remains strong as we continue to build home libraries for local 3 and 4-year-olds enrolled in care. The program has three distributions throughout the school year and specifically targets high-needs preschools.
- Our longstanding, classroom-based *Children Who Read Succeed* program maintains a powerful reach of nearly 1700 children by providing take home books three times during the school year. Teacher lesson plans and take-home parent engagement activities are included in each distribution.
- We continued management of the Warmline with a dedicated early childhood specialist to answer the calls. Our warmline provides one-on-one support for teachers, parents and children involved.
- We are new members of the Englewood Chamber of Commerce and the Lakewood Ranch Business Alliance and remain active members of the Chambers of Commerce in the cities of Sarasota, Venice and North Port. ELC brochures are in each lobby and contact info and mission are on each chamber website.

PROVIDER FINANCIAL SUPPORTS

Provide a list of grants and financial supports (for example, awards or bonuses) offered to school readiness program providers and their staff to assist them in meeting applicable state requirements for the program assessment required under s. [1002.82\(2\)\(n\)](#), child care performance standards, implementing developmentally appropriate curricula and related classroom resources that support curricula, providing literacy supports, and providing continued professional learning and training.

Include the qualifying criteria to receive grants and financial supports and related monitoring activities to verify appropriate use of support.

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Many of the previous activities and training opportunities within the Build A Better Workforce initiative, implemented in the prior fiscal year, were continued under our ARPA plan this year. This included multiple stipend opportunities both for new hires and existing teachers completing professional development training. A wide range of opportunities for professional development were offered with corresponding stipends, some repeated from the BBW plan from prior year as well as the ones listed in the training section of this report as per the specified categories. 244 individual teachers were able to benefit from this financial support.

As part of that initiative, certificates of completion and/or narrative reports, and other documentation to demonstrate and verify that the training was completed were collected prior to the stipends being issued. Additional stipends were offered for various combinations of trainings, included for those that attended the resurrected ELC Annual Provider conference and who submitted a report describing what they learned and how they implemented new ideas, new strategies, something that they learned, within their classrooms.

As part of our approved ARPA plan, we were able to offer retention bonuses to 700 teachers already working in the field with grants ranging from \$750 to \$4700 depending on how many years in the industry.

We continued the \$500 new hire bonuses as well and 66 teachers new to the field were able to benefit from those.

As part of our overall ARPA plan, we additionally implemented a widespread grant to specifically assist providers in replenishing their playground with supplies and materials focused on outdoor gross motor activities. Each program was able to purchase up to \$4000 of gross motor equipment for their programs. 89 programs requested and received materials for their program.

The *Strengthening Quality* preschool partnership with the United Way Suncoast (UWS) continued this year. Entering the program's fourth year, and final year, 3 new childcare sites, located in specific zip codes, were strategically chosen to participate in this comprehensive program. The UWS fulfills many material needs of the preschool as well as provides subcontracted, direct mental health supports. In turn, the ELC provides individualized, high-quality professional development for the teachers including stipends upon completion.

Programs that participate in our LENA program also receive financial support through stipends for participating teachers. 32 individual teachers from among 22 classrooms received such stipends.

As in the past, capacity remains a hurdle for infant care in our community. The Coalition continues to work closely with community partners and providers to enhance infant care and capacity. During the 23-24 years we were able to assist 3 providers with mini grants to help open and outfit 3 new infant rooms.

TRAINING AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

Provide a list and description of trainings and/or technical assistance activities the coalition offered to school readiness program providers, staff, and parents in each of the following areas.

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ELC of Sarasota offered extensive opportunities for professional development. Many of the trainings fit within several of the designated training categories below.

- Early Learning Standards
 - ***Instructional Support for Coaches:*** This training deepens the understanding of effective interactions with the CLASS instructional support domain. Coaches will learn strategies for supporting teachers as they increase the effectiveness of their interactions within this domain. This course gives coaches the confidence and proficiency to help teachers make improvements to their Instructional Support interactions.
 - ***CLASS Observation Training, Infant/Toddler and Pre-K:*** Participants learned how to observe teachers-student interactions and capture meaningful data on classroom quality. Research shows that CLASS improves teacher-student interactions, measures effective interactions across age levels, promotes educational gains and enhances social-emotional well-being.
 - ***STAR Babies Special Training and Research 10 Part Series:*** This ten-week certification program that is unique to and developed by the Sarasota County ELC is specifically designed for childcare professionals who care for children birth through 2.
 - ***Cognitive Support for Infants and Toddlers:*** This training will help participants better understand the CLASS Engaged Support for Learning domain to improve quality in their effectiveness and interactions with children they care for in their classrooms. Knowledge gained promotes positive social and emotional growth through nurturing, well-managed and engaging classrooms. This training is for teachers of children Birth to two years of age and Star Babies certified teachers who need recertification Participants received a \$385 kit to be used in the classroom.
 - ***Introduction to Creative Curriculum for Preschool-*** This training provides support for teachers who are using Creative Curriculum in their classroom. With their guidance children will participate in activities that empower them to be confident, creative, and caring learners through play-based, hands-on investigations. This is a research-based approach that incorporates language, literacy, and mathematics throughout the day.
 - ***MarcoPolo for Learning:*** MarcoPolo provides educators with a pathway to support classroom quality, child engagement, and family connections. Educators are given the training and tools to elevate classroom quality and engage children on their learning journey. Sarasota County ELC has contracted with Maro Polo to provide this platform to be used by programs and educators. children and their families. A variety of introductory and professional development training has been offered to train teachers and directors to use the tool for curriculum enhancement.

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- Frame Their Learning:** This training is designed to help teachers improve their performance and raise their CLASS Instructional Support Scores. The resources offered help teachers ask more thought-provoking questions and improve their exchanges with students to spur higher quality interactions, learning and retention. Using Frame Their Learning, teachers also learn how to better incorporate a rich STEM vocabulary into lessons.
- Monthly Directors Connection:** Coalition led meetings for Directors and Family Child Care Providers to encourage networking, sharing of ideas, and idea swapping. ELC staff offer updates to attendees that relate to Assessment, VPK, Aspire/Apprenticeship, professional development opportunities, community events and SR and licensing changes. Guest speakers attend to provide agency specific information. Topics include but are not limited to, behavior management, curriculum resources, literacy development (LENA), mental health, staff morale, and DEL Health and safety and DCF Professional development.
- Thinking and Thriving:** This training facilitated by Teachstone, allowed the chance to explore ways to use interactions to help children develop their cognitive and language skills. Educators learned how to individualize support for every child, including those with disabilities and dual language learners and understand how to increase the CLASS defined domains of Responsive Caregiving and Engaged Support for learning.
- Baby Stem:** Building off a child’s natural curiosity and love for exploration and discovery, Baby STEM helps elevate responsible caregiving and increase STEM learning opportunities, de-mystifying what a developmentally appropriate, early childhood STEM foundation looks like while providing opportunities for language acquisition, social-emotional, and other cognitive skill development. This online training was facilitated by Discovery Source and a curriculum resource book for activity planning was provided to attendees.
- Infant/Toddler and Pre-K CLASS Group Coaching:** CLASS Group Coaching (MMCI) is an interactive course for teachers. Over the course of 12 weeks multiple sessions, a Teachstone certified ELC coach provides training to a group of teachers, preparing them to identify, understand, and apply stronger CLASS interactions in their classrooms.
- Behavior Boot Camp:** This multi-week Zoom training delivered by First Day Learning focused on introducing educators to the mental health and behavioral philosophies needed to create responsive classrooms. Content is developed based on trauma informed, behavioral focused research. Topics included, Classroom Relationships, Classroom Environments, Intentional Teaching, Classroom Support, Understanding Behavior, Documenting Behavior, Understanding Behavior Teaching Replacement, Ongoing Support, Tiered Support, Cognitive Support, Inclusion Collaborative, Inclusion Support, and Navigating Difficult conversations. The open forum encouraged networking and shared ideas amongst the participants.

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- ***Frog Street Curriculum Infant – Pre-K*** This online curriculum training was facilitated by professional development staff of Frog Street. Priority was given to programs that are currently using Frog Street Curriculum, but others were welcome to attend. Separate age specific training was provided and offered a great opportunity for a refresher as well as to learn new ideas in relation to implementing the curriculum in the classroom.
- ***Introduction to Creative Curriculum for Preschool-*** This training provides support for teachers who are using Creative Curriculum in their classroom. With their guidance children will participate in activities that empower them to be confident, creative, and caring learners through play-based, hands-on investigations. This is a research-based approach that incorporates language, literacy, and mathematics throughout the day.
- Child Screenings
 - ***Behavior Boot Camp:*** This multi-week Zoom training delivered by First Day Learning focused on introducing educators to the mental health and behavioral philosophies needed to create responsive classrooms. Content is developed based on trauma informed, behavioral focused research. Topics included, Classroom Relationships, Classroom Environments, Intentional Teaching, Classroom Support, Understanding Behavior, Documenting Behavior, Understanding Behavior Teaching Replacement, Ongoing Support, Tiered Support, Cognitive Support, Inclusion Collaborative, Inclusion Support, and Navigating Difficult conversations. The open forum encouraged networking and shared ideas amongst the participants
 - ***Monthly Directors Connection:*** Coalition led meetings for Directors and Family Child Care Providers to encourage networking, sharing of ideas, and idea swapping. ELC staff offer updates to attendees that relate to Assessment, VPK, Aspire/Apprenticeship, professional development opportunities, community events and SR and licensing changes. Guest speakers attend to provide agency specific information. Topics include but are not limited to, behavior management, curriculum resources, literacy development (LENA), mental health, staff morale, and DEL Health and safety and DCF Professional development.
- Child Assessments
 - ***DECA Assessment:*** Educators were invited to explore the DECA assessment in a 3-part webinar series. This opportunity was facilitated by Nefertiti Poyner, Devereux Center for Resilience. Information relating to the research-based tools and strategies to promote protective factors like self-regulation, initiative and attachment and how to use the data to strengthen and support resilience and protective factors was provided. Providers attending the training received access to the E-DECA online assessment for the program as well as the book, Promoting Resilience in Preschoolers from the ELC.

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- **Monthly Directors Connection:** Coalition led meetings for Directors and Family Child Care Providers to encourage networking, sharing of ideas, and idea swapping. ELC staff offer updates to attendees that relate to Assessment, VPK, Aspire/Apprenticeship, professional development opportunities, community events and SR and licensing changes. Guest speakers attend to provide agency specific information. Topics include but are not limited to, behavior management, curriculum resources, literacy development (LENA), mental health, staff morale, and DEL Health and safety and DCF Professional development.
- **Thinking and Thriving:** This training facilitated by Teachstone, allowed the chance to explore ways to use interactions to help children develop their cognitive and language skills. Educators learned how to individualize support for every child, including those with disabilities and dual language learners and understand how to increase the CLASS defined domains of Responsive Caregiving and Engaged Support for learning.
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- Child Development Research and Best Practices
 - **MarcoPolo for Learning:** MarcoPolo provides educators with a pathway to support classroom quality, child engagement, and family connections. Educators are given the training and tools to elevate classroom quality and engage children on their learning journey. Sarasota County ELC has contracted with Maro Polo to provide this platform to be used by programs and educators. children and their families. A variety of introductory and professional development training has been offered to train teachers and directors to use the tool for curriculum enhancement.
 - **Introduction to Creative Curriculum for Preschool-** This training provides support for teachers who are using Creative Curriculum in their classroom. With their guidance children will participate in activities that empower them to be confident, creative, and caring learners through play-based, hands-on investigations. This is a research-based approach that incorporates language, literacy, and mathematics throughout the day.
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- **CLASS Feedback Strategies:** Participants learned ways in which to translate CLASS observation data into effective feedback to teachers in a way that will positively impact their interactions with children in their classrooms.
- **Instructional Support for Coaches:** This training deepens the understanding of effective interactions with the CLASS instructional support domain. Coaches will learn strategies for supporting teachers as they increase the effectiveness of their interactions within this domain. This course gives coaches the confidence and proficiency to help teachers make improvements to their Instructional Support interactions.
- **Positive Discipline:** This is an opportunity for participants to engage in an interactive learning experience of uncovering the many factors that influence young children’s behavior. This multi-session class is based on the book *Positive Discipline for Preschoolers* by Jane Nelsen, Cheryl Erwin & Roslyn Ann Duffy (4th Edition). Participants will receive a complimentary deck of tool cards and a copy of the book to supplement them in the classroom.
- **Positive Behavior Strategies (PBS):** Facilitated by a local mental health specialist, participants learned how to reduce challenging behavior while teaching social-emotional skills. Each classroom present received PBS kits at this live training valued at \$230. The kits include Classroom Visual Displays, Emotional Literacy, Tucker the Turtle, Problem Solver Solutions, and Super Friends. Each kit is jam packed with beautiful visual materials to support the classroom
- **Infant/Toddler Social Emotional Strategies:** This training, facilitated by Teachstone via Zoom, helped educators recognize signs of dysregulation, provided strategies to support regulation, and recognize the connection between teachers’ own self-regulation and children’s regulation skills. Powered by CLASS, strategies and guidance are provided for intentionally using interactions to promote positive relationships and social-emotional development. Participants received a \$385 kit to be used in the classroom.
- **Monthly Directors Connection:** Coalition led meetings for Directors and Family Child Care Providers to encourage networking, sharing of ideas, and idea swapping. ELC staff offer updates to attendees that relate to Assessment, VPK, Aspire/Apprenticeship, professional development opportunities, community events and SR and licensing changes. Guest speakers attend to provide agency

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specific information. Topics include but are not limited to, behavior management, curriculum resources, literacy development (LENA), mental health, staff morale, and DEL Health and safety and DCF Professional development.

- ***Bertelsen Coaching Cohort:*** We would like to know how many of our sites would be interested in participating in a coaching cohort. This would be a multi-week virtual opportunity to work with a coach through the Bertelsen institute over a 7-week period, with group zoom meetings along with some independent work in between. See the attached flyer with more information. It is open to teachers and directors. The focus would be on general best practices with a CLASS lens. Individuals would be assigned to cohort groups, not necessarily with the same teachers at the same site, but all working in Sarasota programs. This allows for interaction with different teachers in other programs to get different perspectives. There would be no cost to participate, and incentives will be offered to participating teachers who complete the full 7-week program.
- ***Behavior Boot Camp:*** This multi-week Zoom training delivered by First Day Learning focused on introducing educators to the mental health and behavioral philosophies needed to create responsive classrooms. Content is developed based on trauma informed, behavioral focused research. Topics included, Classroom Relationships, Classroom Environments, Intentional Teaching, Classroom Support, Understanding Behavior, Documenting Behavior, Understanding Behavior Teaching Replacement, Ongoing Support, Tiered Support, Cognitive Support, Inclusion Collaborative, Inclusion Support, and Navigating Difficult conversations. The open forum encouraged networking and shared ideas amongst the participants.
- ***Cognitive Support for Infants and Toddlers:*** This training will help participants better understand the CLASS Engaged Support for Learning domain to improve quality in their effectiveness and interactions with children they care for in their classrooms. Knowledge gained promotes positive social and emotional growth through nurturing, well-managed and engaging classrooms. This training is for teachers of children Birth to two years of age and Star Babies certified teachers who need recertification. Participants received a \$385 kit to be used in the classroom.
- ***Baby Stem:*** Building off a child’s natural curiosity and love for exploration and discovery, Baby STEM helps elevate responsible caregiving and increase STEM learning opportunities, de-mystifying what a developmentally appropriate, early childhood STEM foundation looks like while providing opportunities for language acquisition, social-emotional, and other cognitive skill development. This online training was facilitated by Discovery Source and a curriculum resource book for activity planning was provided to attendees.
- ***Frame Their Learning:*** This training is designed to help teachers improve their performance and raise their CLASS Instructional Support Scores. The resources offered help teachers ask more thought-provoking questions and improve their exchanges with students to spur higher quality interactions, learning and

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retention. Using Frame Their Learning, teachers also learn how to better incorporate a rich STEM vocabulary into lessons.

- ***Thinking and Thriving:*** This training facilitated by Teachstone, allowed the chance to explore ways to use interactions to help children develop their cognitive and language skills. Educators learned how to individualize support for every child, including those with disabilities and dual language learners and understand how to increase the CLASS defined domains of Responsive Caregiving and Engaged Support for learning.

- Developmentally Appropriate Curricula and Character Development
 - ***Beyond Centers and Circle & Time:*** Children engage in three different but connected three kinds of play. Play is the vehicle that helps children develop the skills and knowledge needed for later school success. This training delves into BCCT themes and lesson planning that will provide educators with a framework for providing interesting and exciting learning experiences that will support the child’s journey towards school readiness. This session laid out the foundation for understanding these materials and concepts. Techniques to explain how educators can arrange and choose play materials and experiences that will support positive social and cognitive development were shared.
 - ***Beyond Cribs & Rattles:*** This session provided information that helped educators understand the development of young children. The first three years are the most important time of development, and it is vital that educators understand each child’s development so that quality experiences can be provided that will be designed to enhance every domain and meet the needs of each child as an individual. Many infant and toddler environments are not designed to meet the developmental needs of the children in care. This session explored the kinds of play seen in the behavior of young children and provided information that will help educators choose and arrange play materials that are appropriate for each age group.
 - ***Frog Street Curriculum Infant – Pre-K*** This online curriculum training was facilitated by professional development staff of Frog Street. Priority was given to programs that are currently using Frog Street Curriculum, but others were welcome to attend. Separate age specific training was provided and offered a great opportunity for a refresher as well as to learn new ideas in relation to implementing the curriculum in the classroom.
 - ***Introduction to Creative Curriculum for Preschool-*** This training provides support for teachers who are using Creative Curriculum in their classroom. With their guidance children will participate in activities that empower them to be confident, creative, and caring learners through play-based, hands-on investigations. This is a research-based approach that incorporates language, literacy, and mathematics throughout the day.

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- MarcoPolo for Learning:** MarcoPolo provides educators with a pathway to support classroom quality, child engagement, and family connections. Educators are given the training and tools to elevate classroom quality and engage children on their learning journey. Sarasota County ELC has contracted with Maro Polo to provide this platform to be used by programs and educators. children and their families. A variety of introductory and professional development training has been offered to train teachers and directors to use the tool for curriculum enhancement.
- Frame Their Learning:** This training is designed to help teachers improve their performance and raise their CLASS Instructional Support Scores. The resources offered help teachers ask more thought-provoking questions and improve their exchanges with students to spur higher quality interactions, learning and retention. Using Frame Their Learning, teachers also learn how to better incorporate a rich STEM vocabulary into lessons.
- STAR Babies Special Training and Research 10 Part Series:** This ten-week certification program that is unique to and developed by the Sarasota County ELC is specifically designed for childcare professionals who care for children birth through 2.
- Cognitive Support for Infants and Toddlers:** This training will help participants better understand the CLASS Engaged Support for Learning domain to improve quality in their effectiveness and interactions with children they care for in their classrooms. Knowledge gained promotes positive social and emotional growth through nurturing, well-managed and engaging classrooms. This training is for teachers of children Birth to two years of age and Star Babies certified teachers who need recertification. Participants received a \$385 kit to be used in the classroom.
- Infant/Toddler and Pre-K CLASS Group Coaching:** CLASS Group Coaching (MMCI) is an interactive course for teachers. Over the course of 12 weeks multiple sessions, a Teachstone certified ELC coach provides training to a group of teachers, preparing them to identify, understand, and apply stronger CLASS interactions in their classrooms.
- CLASS Observation Training, Infant/Toddler and Pre-K:** Participants learned how to observe teachers-student interactions and capture meaningful data on classroom quality. Research shows that CLASS improves teacher-student interactions, measures effective interactions across age levels, promotes educational gains and enhances social-emotional well-being.
- FLIP-IT:** Teachers will explore four supportive steps to help young children learn about their feelings, gain self-control, and reduce challenging behavior. Strategies learned in the course are easily implemented and proven to transform challenging behavior.
- Positive Behavior Strategies (PBS):** Facilitated by a local mental health specialist, participants learned how to reduce challenging behavior while teaching social-emotional skills. Each classroom present received PBS kits at this live

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training valued at \$230. The kits include Classroom Visual Displays, Emotional Literacy, Tucker the Turtle, Problem Solver Solutions, and Super Friends. Each kit is jam packed with beautiful visual materials to support the classroom

- ***CLASS Foundation for Teachers, 21 hours of training:*** This online training course is comprised of 4 courses – A Pre-K Primer for Teachers, Emotional Support for Pre-K Teachers, Classroom Organization for Pre-K teachers and Instructional Support for Teachers. These courses will allow Pre-K teachers to learn about the importance of their interactions with children and how they impact a child’s development. The knowledge gained supports teachers in understanding and applying effective interactions in the classroom.
- ***Instructional Support for Coaches and Teachers:*** These online trainings facilitated by Teachstone deepen the understanding of effective interactions with the CLASS instructional support domain. Educators learned strategies that encourage increased effectiveness of their interactions within this domain. This course gives coaches/teachers the confidence and proficiency to help make improvements to Instructional Support interactions.
- ***Monthly Directors Connection:*** Coalition led meetings for Directors and Family Child Care Providers to encourage networking, sharing of ideas, and idea swapping. ELC staff offer updates to attendees that relate to Assessment, VPK, Aspire/Apprenticeship, professional development opportunities, community events and SR and licensing changes. Guest speakers attend to provide agency specific information. Topics include but are not limited to, behavior management, curriculum resources, literacy development (LENA), mental health, staff morale, and DEL Health and safety and DCF Professional development.
- ***Baby Stem:*** Building off a child’s natural curiosity and love for exploration and discovery, Baby STEM helps elevate responsible caregiving and increase STEM learning opportunities, de-mystifying what a developmentally appropriate, early childhood STEM foundation looks like while providing opportunities for language acquisition, social-emotional, and other cognitive skill development. This online training was facilitated by Discovery Source and a curriculum resource book for activity planning was provided to attendees.
- **Teacher-Child Interactions**
 - ***DECA Assessment:*** Educators were invited to explore the DECA assessment in a 3-part webinar series. This opportunity was facilitated by Nefertiti Poyner, Devereux Center for Resilience. Information relating to the research-based tools and strategies to promote protective factors like self-regulation, initiative and attachment and how to use the data to strengthen and support resilience and protective factors was provided. Providers attending the training received access to the E-DECA online assessment for the program as well as the book, Promoting Resilience in Preschoolers from the ELC.
 - ***STAR Babies Special Training and Research 10 Part Series:*** This ten-week certification program that is unique to and developed by the Sarasota County ELC

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is specifically designed for childcare professionals who care for children birth through 2.

- ***Infant/Toddler Social Emotional Strategies:*** This training, facilitated by Teachstone via Zoom, helped educators recognize signs of dysregulation, provided strategies to support regulation, and recognize the connection between teachers' own self-regulation and children's regulation skills. Powered by CLASS, strategies and guidance are provided for intentionally using interactions to promote positive relationships and social-emotional development. Participants received a \$385 kit to be used in the classroom.
- ***Infant/Toddler and Pre-K CLASS Group Coaching:*** CLASS Group Coaching (MMCI) is an interactive course for teachers. Over the course of 12 weeks multiple sessions, a Teachstone certified ELC coach provides training to a group of teachers, preparing them to identify, understand, and apply stronger CLASS interactions in their classrooms.
- ***Calming Kit Training:*** This training offered strategies to address the big emotions that children experience in the classroom. Facilitated by Discovery Source, educators investigated the reasons behind behaviors and ways in which to enhance self-regulation and support of a child's social emotional development. Participants received a backpack full of materials to aid them in using these strategies in the classroom.
- ***Thinking and Thriving:*** This training facilitated by Teachstone, allowed the chance to explore ways to use interactions to help children develop their cognitive and language skills. Educators learned how to individualize support for every child, including those with disabilities and dual language learners and understand how to increase the CLASS defined domains of Responsive Caregiving and Engaged Support for learning.
- ***Behavior Boot Camp:*** This multi-week Zoom training delivered by First Day Learning focused on introducing educators to the mental health and behavioral philosophies needed to create responsive classrooms. Content is developed based on trauma informed, behavioral focused research. Topics included, Classroom Relationships, Classroom Environments, Intentional Teaching, Classroom Support, Understanding Behavior, Documenting Behavior, Understanding Behavior Teaching Replacement, Ongoing Support, Tiered Support, Cognitive Support, Inclusion Collaborative, Inclusion Support, and Navigating Difficult conversations. The open forum encouraged networking and shared ideas amongst the participants
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- ***FLIP-IT:*** Teachers will explore four supportive steps to help young children learn about their feelings, gain self-control, and reduce challenging behavior. Strategies learned in the course are easily implemented and proven to transform challenging behavior.
- ***Positive Discipline:*** This is an opportunity for participants to engage in an interactive learning experience of uncovering the many factors that influence young children’s behavior. This multi-session class is based on the book *Positive Discipline for Preschoolers* by Jane Nelsen, Cheryl Erwin & Roslyn Ann Duffy (4th Edition). Participants will receive a complimentary deck of tool cards and a copy of the book to supplement them in the classroom.
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- **Frame Their Learning:** This training is designed to help teachers improve their performance and raise their CLASS Instructional Support Scores. The resources offered help teachers ask more thought-provoking questions and improve their exchanges with students to spur higher quality interactions, learning and retention. Using Frame Their Learning, teachers also learn how to better incorporate a rich STEM vocabulary into lessons.
 - **Monthly Directors Connection:** Coalition led meetings for Directors and Family Child Care Providers to encourage networking, sharing of ideas, and idea swapping. ELC staff offer updates to attendees that relate to professional development opportunities, community events and SR and licensing changes.
 - **CLASS Feedback Strategies:** Participants learned ways in which to translate CLASS observation data into effective feedback to teachers in a way that will positively impact their interactions with children in their classrooms.
 - **Primer for Leaders:** This online training introduces administrators to the CLASS system to focus on, measure, and improve teacher-student interactions.
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- Age-Appropriate Discipline Practices
 - **CLASS Observation Training, Infant/Toddler and Pre-K:** Participants learned how to observe teachers-student interactions and capture meaningful data on classroom quality. Research shows that CLASS improves teacher-student interactions, measures effective interactions across age levels, promotes educational gains and enhances social-emotional well-being.

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- Health and Safety
 - **Monthly Directors Connection:** Coalition led meetings for Directors and Family Child Care Providers to encourage networking, sharing of ideas, and idea swapping. ELC staff offer updates to attendees that relate to professional development opportunities, community events and SR and licensing changes.
 - **STAR Babies Special Training and Research 10 Part Series:** This ten-week certification program that is unique to and developed by the Sarasota County ELC is specifically designed for childcare professionals who care for children birth through 2.
 - **Child Care Emergency Preparedness: CHILDCARE EMERGENCY PREPAREDENESS (CCEPT):** Childcare programs are often left out of emergency planning at the federal, state, and local levels. Save the Children supports childcare recovery post disaster. CCEPT is designed to help childcare providers develop and implement an emergency plan in their childcare program in addition to identifying risks and preparing year-round for emergencies. Childcare providers will be able to create a written plan that addresses their emergency needs and

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continue to communicate, practice, and update their emergency plan on a regular basis. This training is designed for CCR&R's and all childcare providers.

- Nutrition
 - **USDA Food Program Annual Training for Centers and Homes:** Provided training space in the fall and spring for local providers to attend required USDA food service training.
 - **STAR Babies Special Training and Research 10 Part Series:** This ten-week certification program that is unique to and developed by the Sarasota County ELC is specifically designed for childcare professionals who care for children birth through 2.
- First Aid
 - **Pediatric CPR/First Aid:** Five courses were offered for providers to attend.
- Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation
 - **Pediatric CPR/First Aid:** Five courses were offered for providers to attend.
- Recognition of Communicable Diseases
 - **Pediatric CPR/First Aid:** Five courses were offered for providers to attend.
 - **Monthly Directors Connection:** Coalition led meetings for Directors and Family Child Care Providers to encourage networking, sharing of ideas, and idea swapping. ELC staff offer updates to attendees that relate to Assessment, VPK, Aspire/Apprenticeship, professional development opportunities, community events and SR and licensing changes. Guest speakers attend to provide agency specific information. Topics include but are not limited to, behavior management, curriculum resources, literacy development (LENA), mental health, staff morale, and DEL Health and safety and DCF Professional development.
- Child Abuse Detection, Prevention and Reporting
 - **Monthly Directors Connection:** Coalition led meetings for Directors and Family Child Care Providers to encourage networking, sharing of ideas, and idea swapping. ELC staff offer updates to attendees that relate to Assessment, VPK, Aspire/Apprenticeship, professional development opportunities, community events and SR and licensing changes. Guest speakers attend to provide agency specific information. Topics include but are not limited to, behavior management, curriculum resources, literacy development (LENA), mental health, staff morale, and DEL Health and safety and DCF Professional development.

Training and Professional Development Summary/Overview

During the 2023-24 program year, a variety of training options were offered to support participants online, in-person, hybrid, and virtual. ARPA funding provided opportunity for local education/mental health specialists, the Department of Children and Families (DCF), Child Care Training Institute (CCEI), Bertelsen Education, Discovery Source, Frog Street, Creative Curriculum, Pam Phelps (BCCT/BCR) First Day Learning, and Teachstone trainings to be available.

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The ELC of Sarasota County is committed to overseeing and sponsoring a rich system of training and technical assistance for local providers. As demonstrated above our offerings provide a wide variety of topics that offer essential professional knowledge. The professional knowledge the educators obtained from the training opportunities is being realized as programs continue to receive high SR and VPK composite scores. In addition, those educators completing courses were able to receive training stipends for the various courses, as mentioned in the financial supports section of this report.

The ELC of Sarasota reinstated the Provider Conference for educators in January 2024. While this had been an annual training event in the past, COVID had created an issue relating to holding a large in-person event. This obstacle was eliminated in 2024 and the fact that it was a desired opportunity was exemplified by an attendance of nearly 300 local educators. A variety of workshops focusing on positive teacher-child interactions were provided. Topics included, CLASS, VPK, challenging behavior and social emotional strategies, hands on and creative movement activities, classroom transition, program management, marketing, mental health for children and staff, program, preventing expulsion, outdoor classroom opportunities, Child Find, and speech/language. Each workshop was offered three times to allow attendees ample opportunity to select their favorites. Overall educators were able to gain insights, discover new strategies, and connect with fellow early educators. This training was eligible for a professional development training stipend.

The ELC has continued to “grow” its long-standing ASPIRE program which targets individuals interested in joining the Early Childhood field. Providers are still finding it challenging to obtain staff. This opportunity helps those that are interested finish courses and find placement in ECE programs in our community. 160 + new teachers have come into the field since July of 2022. In addition to ASPIRE the ELC has received its official designation for both the Registered Apprenticeship program and the Pre-Apprenticeship program, which the former ASPIRE will morph into.

ELC of Sarasota has also received the preliminary approval from CIE to offer the FCCPC. The final step, which is imminent, will be the certification from DCF to allow the ELC to submit application for the apprentices Florida Birth to Five Childcare professional staff credential (FCCPC). This allows the ELC of Sarasota to fully manage and operate the program without a collegiate umbrella. With the ELC of Sarasota being the first and only Coalition in the state who has achieved this accomplishment, our staff is ready to assist other Coalitions that would hope to receive the designation. All the coursework for these courses continues to be offered by an ELC staff member who is a staff certified apprenticeship instructor who holds a Bachelors and master’s in education in a hybrid format to include in-person and online training. During the 2023/2024-year Participants included 18 Pre-Apprentices with 6 in the queue, 26 Pre-Apprenticeship Providers, 9 Overlapping Providers, 17 Apprenticeship Providers, 23 Apprentices with 3 in queue.

QUALITY ACTIVITIES FOR INFANT AND TODDLER CARE

Provide a description of the quality activities and services the coalition provided to enhance infant and toddler care.

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The STAR Babies certification program implemented many years ago continues to offer childcare professionals working with children ages birth – 2 a unique opportunity to fine-tune their specialized skills. The program is delivered in 10 weeks and is a hybrid of in person and online training that explores neurodevelopment foundations, early language development, relationship building, environment arrangement, and facilitation of the paly experience. A CLASS assessment is completed Pre and Post to validate the knowledge growth that has occurred during the training.

STAR Baby recertification can be achieved by obtaining ongoing professional development that relates directly to the birth through 2 age grouping. Over the past year those interested in recertifying have been able to choose from a variety of targeted infant toddler course work to include Infant and Toddler CLASS group Coaching, and Infant/Toddler CLASS Primer for Teachers, and Infant and Toddler Cognitive Kit trainings.

A variety of training relating specifically to Infant and Toddler care was planned throughout the year to include, Infant Toddler CLASS group Coaching, Beyond Cribs and Rattles, Frog Street Infant/Toddler curriculum, Baby Stem, Infant and Toddler Observation training, Infant Toddler Social Emotional Kit, and Infant Toddler Cognitive Kit trainings. Many of these trainings offered the participant a large amount of materials to support the professional development in the classroom.

As in the past, capacity remains a hurdle for infant care in our community. The Coalition continues to work closely with community partners and providers to enhance infant care and capacity. During the 23-24 years we were able to assist 3 providers with mini grants to help open and outfit 3 new infant rooms.

MONITORING

Describe the process for monitoring compliance with, and enforcement of, applicable state and local requirements.

The monitoring of our providers is done in accordance with all applicable requirements and according to our DEL approved policy copied below.

SR Monitoring of School Readiness Program Providers:

Tier 1 Compliance Tracking/Desk Review

A coalition shall annually monitor each of its SR program providers for Tier 1 compliance with a locally developed tracking log. The tracking log shall include the items below for each SR program provider:

1. Date of certified School Readiness Contract in accordance with Rule 6M-4.610, FAC.
- S:\General Policies and Procedures/027-SR Monitoring of SR Program Providers 7/10/19, with location of our Tier 1 tracking would be S:/School Readiness Provider Contracts Tracing Log for SR Contracts and CCRR Updates

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2. Date of review of Department of Children and Families (DCF) exemption determination letter to ensure provider is eligible to provide the School Readiness Program, if applicable.
3. Date of completion of most recent Health and Safety Inspection (for all school readiness providers in accordance with Rule 6M-4.620, FAC).
4. A Program Assessment was completed in accordance with Rules 6M-4.740, FAC.
5. Date of completion of Quality Improvement Plan Elements (if applicable) in accordance with Rules 6M-4.740, FAC.
6. Conducting Developmental Screenings (if applicable) in accordance with Rule 6M-4.720, FAC.
7. Date of completion of orientation (if applicable) in accordance with Rule 6M-4.610, FAC, OEL-SR20.
8. Date of approval of annual CCR&R Provider Updates in accordance with Rule 6M-9.300(8), FAC.
9. Date of review for completion of monthly enrollment/attendance certifications¹ in accordance with Rule 6M-4.500(2), FAC for the month(s) reviewed for post attendance monitoring.
10. Dates of expiration of liability insurance coverage.

1. Tier 2 Monitoring - Using the DEL designated monitoring tool form for monitoring compliance with the statewide school readiness provider contract; the coalition will monitor a sample representative of all provider types funded by the coalition and include no less than the number indicated in the Minimum Annual Sample Size provided by DEL, The sample size is based on the number of SR programs funded by the coalition and not the total number of provider contracts. If a provider has multiple sites, each site must be included in the sample size and selection. This includes contracted provider program sites outside of the coalition service area. The sample first includes all new School Readiness providers contracted during the previous program year. Then, the providers who were not included in the sample the previous program year are selected. If the sample size is not reached, the Excel function for sampling is utilized for a random selection of the remaining providers. The coalition will monitor providers determined to be high risk more frequently than annually, and each high-risk provider's monitoring schedule will be determined based on the actual monitoring results and provider's follow up compliance. The number of findings as outlined by DEL in the monitoring tool Form OEL-SR20M defines high risk. For the initial monitoring schedule, historical monitoring results prior to the execution of the statewide school readiness provider contract will be used by the coalition to determine risk level when developing the monitoring schedule. For each provider monitored under Tier 2 monitoring, the coalition shall monitor a sample of at least twenty five percent of a SR program provider's SR child files.

2. Corrective Action Plans - If observations of noncompliance are made by coalition monitoring staff using either Tier 1 or Tier 2 monitoring, the coalition shall require a Corrective Action Plan (CAP) be developed and implemented by the school readiness program provider. The coalition must notify the provider in writing. The notice must identify the specific requirement(s), which the provider failed to meet and describe how the provider failed to meet each requirement. In addition, the notice must provide a detailed description

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of any required corrective action and set a deadline for completion of the corrective action, preferably within 30 days. Finally, the notice must state that the provider may request a review of the findings of noncompliance. Upon determining that the provider has satisfactorily completed the corrective action, the coalition shall notify the provider in writing.

Note 1: Additional monitoring visits may be done in certain circumstances. For example, the ELC Board reserves the right to develop, publish and implement specific criteria that justifies receiving the Gold Seal payment differential, unless DEL provides specific guidance in this area. ELC may also conduct additional monitoring on those sites based on a parent complaint, suspected of fraud or that are struggling to meet any required expectations.

VPK Monitoring

Per Policy 001-State Policy as Coalition Policy, all internal ELC/CCC procedures are reviewed and modified as needed to incorporate any official newly adopted Rules and/or any approved official policy guidance sent to us from Division of Early Learning (DEL), pending final Rules on that topic. Once Rules are adopted then those are followed as written, as local ELC/CCC procedures unless the Rules provide for a locally established ELC policy on a particular topic.

PROCEDURES

The following outlines our process for monitoring compliance:

1. The selected sample group of VPK providers are monitored on-site at least once per fiscal year. The required minimum sample number is set by The Division of Early Learning (DEL), and the monitoring visit is to ensure providers meet the minimum VPK legislative mandates and the DEL outlined procedures. Whenever possible all sites are visited at least once.
2. Coalition staff, licensing personnel, and/or any of the individuals under contract to the Coalition can complete these on-site visits, recording data using the Form entitled “Voluntary Prekindergarten Provider Monitoring” (Exhibit VII), which contains all required elements.
3. VPK sites are also monitored through the coalition’s processing of monthly VPK provider payments as related to attendance of children enrolled.
4. VPK providers will also be rotated randomly to receive notification of attendance monitoring for a particular month (s), during which they will be required to either send in all appropriate documentation related to attendance sheets, and/or have them available for an on-site review by a Coalition designee.
5. In addition to program elements, VPK providers will be monitored for compliance with respective attendance policies to ensure that payments have been properly completed and to prevent fraud.
6. All VPK providers must submit required appropriate documentation or paperwork for the site, credentials for the directors and teachers in order to be

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- approved and to ensure compliance. This information may be verified when an on-site visit or monitoring takes place.
7. Additional monitoring visits may be done in certain circumstances and the ELC may conduct additional monitoring on those sites that are struggling to meet required expectations.
 8. If the Coalition receives notification, either formal or informal, that a VPK site is not in compliance with legislative mandates, Coalition staff will initiate a follow up plan and take the appropriate action. Technical Assistance will always be offered to willing providers to ensure the sites are able to meet mandates.
 9. Other formal assessments or evaluations may be initiated as part of a provider's voluntary participation in a Coalition approved or sponsored quality enhancement program, such as the QIS Look for the Stars or PFP.
 10. The ELC Chief Executive Officer will ensure that all the activities and tasks outlined in the ELC Plan and procedures are carried out with regard to provider monitoring or evaluation requirements and outcomes.

INCLUSION

Describe the activities the coalition has implemented to promote inclusive child care, including responding to Warm-Line requests by providers and parents, and providing developmental and health screenings to school readiness program children.

The ELC of Sarasota County continues to support a full continuum of Developmental Screening, Inclusion services and follow up and/or behavioral support when needed. This process begins with the Coalition ensuring that all SR screenings are completed by the provider if the parent has deferred the screening to them, as well as ensuring at the time of enrollment that all appropriate health screenings have been completed.

ELC updated its process to support providers in this process and to monitor completion of developmental screenings within the intervals designated, as well as any follow up needed and parental involvement.

For children where a concern is expressed or noted, a range of additional services are offered as warranted. These additional services can include on-site consultation for the teacher as needed, and appropriate referrals and follow-up for long-term support for special needs children.

Inclusion services and support, including the Warm line, are provided in-house. A screening triage system is in place that quickly identifies both the teacher's and/or parent's primary concern for referring the child, the number of developmental concerns shown by the child, and the teacher's other community supports such as PBS training, DECA and ELC coaching. This allows for a more comprehensive and immediate telephone consultation and response for the teachers. Handouts are provided that focus on the teachers' concerns, to pinpoint assessment tools that are the most appropriate, and at times to provide referral and resource information that solved the concern over the phone. On-site follow up for those situations that need it is still provided and is enhanced in our community through additional funding from the local United Way where an early childhood mental health consultant visits the sites and can work with the child and teacher within the classroom to specifically address behavioral concerns and train teachers in prevention of challenging behavior. This can be done through our partner agency, The

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Florida Center who has funding to assign specific staff to specific United Way sponsored sites for a period of time, or through an ELC staff behavioral specialist/coach who can visit the provider sites and work with the teachers directly. Resources are also provided to the parents as appropriate.

The ELC continues to regularly offer several training courses for teachers to promote inclusive childcare as well as on handling behavioral challenges such as Positive Discipline, Conscious Discipline, Positive Behavior Supports, and FLIP IT. E-DECA continues to be available to childcare sites which also provides strategies that the teachers and parents can implement to support the child in their areas of need.

The Warm line provides information on all agencies within the area that offer speech, mental health, occupational and physical therapy evaluations and services so that parents can choose which program fits best with their needs should those services be needed. An ELC Early Childhood Specialist, or a referral can be made for a consultant, who can go into classrooms with children referred to the Warm line and help the teacher with strategies that are general good appropriate practice that may help the referred child while waiting for services to be put into place. Any strategies shared most likely benefit all children in the classroom, not just the referred child.

The ELC continues to have very good working relationship with *FDLRS* and *Early Steps*. Staff makes referrals to both as deemed appropriate. Staff provides parents with information on how each of these agencies work and what to expect next in the referral process. After referrals are complete to agencies, coalition staff keeps in communication to get updates on services

Staff also actively participated in state Inclusion meetings.

IN ADDITION TO THE REQUIRED COMPONENTS OF THIS REPORT, ELC OF SARASOTA COUNTY SHARES THE FOLLOWING MANY LOCAL INITIATIVES THAT POSITIVELY IMPACT OUR MISSION AND WORK TO ENSURE CHILDREN ARE SERVED IN HIGH QUALITY EARLY LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS AND PREPARED FOR SCHOOL AND LIFE

Local QRIS

Our Coalition continues to administer and maintain a robust Quality Rating system, known in Sarasota as the *Look for the Stars: Quality Counts for Children* (LFTS) program. Now, in its 17th year, the program is a comprehensive, county wide system for gauging and improving quality of area childcare centers. Over the years, assessment tools have changed as well as how we weigh specific elements. The CLASS assessment tool has been utilized for the program assessment component for many years now so our community was well prepared for the mandated CLASS program assessments for both SR and VPK providers implemented in recent years.. We continue to focus on teacher/child interactions and other specific areas that research indicates are the most impactful for positive child outcomes. Our local QRIS system aligns with the School Readiness Program Assessment tiered reimbursement system, while still maintaining an expectation for a higher composite CLASS score in order to be designated as “high quality.”

We continue to measure the impact of the program by year-to-year comparison of the assessment data and monitoring the areas identified within the assessment for

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improvement, in recent years, most notably within the instructional support component of the CLASS. We also track the percentage of participating sites that are at 3-star level or higher, representing sufficient quality care, which remains at 100%. Additionally, reports are commissioned at regular intervals from an outside researcher, who reviews the data and results of the program, and those reports confirm the program's impact in Sarasota County.

One of the most important aspects of this system wide QRIS program is that all sites, of all quality levels, in all neighborhoods, serving all ranges of incomes, can participate and demonstrate high quality for children. School readiness children and those at highest risk, thereby most in need of high-quality early care, are indeed receiving that care at sites committed to quality.

In addition, the parent education component of the QRIS is critical. We encourage parents to use the dedicated website, lookforthestars.org, as a detailed tool in choosing a quality provider. We continue to educate parents on the components of quality including what to look for and why it is important. While cost and location remain a top influencer, quality is also noted among parents when making childcare decisions.

As part of our “High-Class” banner campaign where providers who had received a designated high class score threshold (well above the state required minimum) receive a banner to display outside their facility, parents are additionally educated to how to find and choose high quality care for their children.

DEL requires that all current and updated CLASS scores be posted to an ELC's website for parents to review. This in conjunction with TV and other videos targeting parents to help them understand these CLASS scores, have in fact increased parents' awareness of quality. Providers are reporting that many of their recent enrollments are asking about CLASS scores and indicating that they saw them on the website and this also leads into parents asking about their quality star rating as well.

Early Literacy Efforts

Every year the Early Learning Coalition of Sarasota County manages several comprehensive early literacy programs in both preschool classrooms and the community. Aimed at improving literacy skills among high needs children, our innovative programs bring both books and book culture to some of the most vulnerable children in our community.

Literacy Buddy Project

For nearly 15 years, the Coalition has managed and coordinated an ever-expanding outreach program called the *Literacy Buddy Project*. In another record-breaking year, 300 community volunteers sponsored 580 children, the most children ever served since the program's inception.

Community volunteers, known as “buddies,” correspond in Pen Pal-like fashion with 3 and 4-year-olds currently enrolled in area childcare centers. Children create drawings about something they want to read about. The ELC mails the

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drawings to volunteers who, in turn, purchase a new book for their “little buddy” based on the drawing subject matter. Volunteers also write each child a handwritten note. Correspondence happens three times during the school year: fall, winter, spring. Teachers read all books within the classroom before sending them home with the children. Once the books are taken home, children then enjoy reading them with siblings, parents and caregivers.

Books and letters involved with *Literacy Buddy* provide a unique, creative outlet to improve children’s literacy skills. The goal of growing children’s at-home libraries is achieved, not to mention the intentional family engagement component as parents and caregivers read and explore the book with their little ones at home. This early literacy program has strong, long-term growth potential, especially since volunteers can participate from anywhere in the country.

Not only does Literacy Buddy get books into the hands of children who need them the most, it also draws in local community and business partners to invest time, money and resources into early childhood development. Meanwhile, volunteers actively gain knowledge about the importance of early literacy and learn about the positive ripple effects for children who have access to an enriching early learning experience.

Children Who Read Succeed

A county wide, classroom-based, early literacy program that reaches all children at selected childcare centers: infants, toddlers and preschoolers. Thanks to steadfast financial support from the Downtown Sarasota Kiwanis Club, coupled with ELC matched funds, the program distributes more than over 4,000 books to nearly 1,600 children attending early learning centers across the county. These centers serve large numbers of low income, at-risk and foster care children.

Children Who Read Succeed is a comprehensive book study modified for little learners. Each session begins when the ELC delivers boxes of books to participating sites. Each book box contains a classroom copy of an age-appropriate book, a lesson plan designed to engage classrooms in a book study week, an educational poster for parents as well as a book for each child to bring home at the end of the book study week.

The ELC weaves book themes into developmentally appropriate lesson plans that we provide to teachers. We write all lessons in line with the Florida Early Learning Standards. During the book distribution week, teachers read the book with the children, highlight new vocabulary and complete activities together. At the end of the week, children take the book home along with a list of at-home extension activities to complete and enjoy with parents. The Coalition also offers a Pinterest page outlining additional, fun activities for teachers and/or parents to build upon the book study.

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Read Learn Dream Sarasota

With incredible results and wonderful testimonials from the program's second year, we rolled into a successful third year of our comprehensive early literacy program called *Read Learn Dream* (RLD). Funded by the Siesta Key Kiwanis Club, and co-created in collaboration with the ELC Sarasota, we worked together to help build strong home libraries for our littlest learners. The program, exclusive to VPK students, provides participating 4-year-olds with one or two books per month for the entire school year. With a parent-centric approach, RLD includes bilingual (Spanish) reading tip stickers in every book and provides a bilingual list of simple, fun, book-themed home activities with every book distribution plus a QR code redirecting parents to a YouTube read aloud of the book. Reaching 100 students in our pilot year, 150 students in our second year, we continue to grow, serving 180 children in the 2023-2024 school year.

LENA Grow Program

After achieving remarkable results from our first three years, we launched our fourth year of LENA Grow in 2023-2024, reaching nearly 120 children. LENA is an innovative, research-based professional development program for improving literacy skills for infant, toddler, and preschool children. Measuring the most predictive elements of child outcomes, the tech-savvy program helps teachers gain the skills to measurably improve classroom early language quality by boosting interactions and helps leadership make more informed planning and policy decisions. More recently the LENA researchers are reporting that there are significantly important increases in the specific domain of instructional support for the participating teachers. This is phenomenal as this can be one of the hardest areas to show impact and growth.

The program couples LENA's "talk pedometer" technology with weekly coaching sessions. Last year, we served 203 children within 22 classrooms, at 2 sites, working with 32 teachers. Additionally, LENA provides a take-home packet to engage parents by offering tips on conversation starters and showing them ways to increase words and "turns" when talking, reading and singing with their child. We are excited to keep the momentum going thanks to the financial support of the Community Foundation of Sarasota County.

Bucket of Books

Bucket of Books is a community-based early literacy outreach program that puts more than a dozen books in the waiting rooms of local businesses where children frequent, but are not necessarily kid-friendly places. Buckets are placed across the county in locations such as nail salons, barber shops, auto body shops, laundromats, cash n' check stores and sliding scale medical clinics. In addition to children's books, each bucket contains brochures and rack cards highlighting CCR&R services, Florida VPK, developmental milestones, our own local QRIS program *Look For The Stars* as well as statistical data on the importance of early literacy.

EVALUATION OF DIRECT ENHANCEMENT SERVICES

COVID-19 decimated the program since the act of sharing suddenly stopped and many businesses closed their doors, some permanently. After pausing for nearly 3 years, we're excited to announce that we have been awarded private funding, in the form of a \$15,000 grant, to both resurrect the program AND double its original size. Buckets and books have already been purchased. The relaunch is scheduled for late fall 2024.

Bucket of Books tackles the alarming issue of book-dry homes in high poverty neighborhoods. It also attempts to narrow the gap of systemic scarcity of books where social infrastructure is weak. Categorized by strategic placement and clever outreach, *Bucket of Books* is a way to bring literacy and learning to where the children actually are.

Growing Minds Read

In prior years, ELC had implemented an award-winning comprehensive social marketing campaign built upon the message *Talk, Listen, and Read*. This initiative aims to remind parents of how critical they are to their child's future success in both school and in life. Messaging involves easy and simple ways parents can impact their child's early literacy skills. Despite losing our outside funding source, the ELC of Sarasota County now carries the campaign and maintains the program, which is now called *Growing Minds Read*. In doing so, the ELC coordinates many of the activities including dissemination of the materials and updating the corresponding parent education website, growingmindsread.org. Our partners, including the Sarasota County Libraries, mirror our messaging in conjunction with its own local programming such as *Born to Read* and others such as our local First 1000 Days initiative.

Arts Integration

Sarasota County is rich in arts, culture and creativity. Since arts integration is a key component to helping children develop and meet expected standards, the Early Learning Coalition of Sarasota County continues to partner with our area's Arts and Cultural Alliance on a variety of initiatives. Projects and special events make sure to demonstrate the value of the experiential nature of the arts and its impactful contribution to the learning of every child and overall school readiness.

We continued our strong partnership with Van Wezel Performing Arts who sends talented teaching artists for in-person classroom visits. Last year the Van Wezel program included 6 preschools and served 85 children. We are currently in talks with other arts organizations to determine expanded offerings for the future.

Bridges to Success

Thanks to funding from a private donor and the Community Foundation of Sarasota County, we continue to implement our *Bridges to Success* (BTS) program. BTS serves up to 12 children per month at two, high quality, star rated family homes in high needs

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communities. Each participating child receives a dedicated college savings account. The private donor then awards enough money to cover either the parent differential fees for those children receiving SR services or the full coverage of childcare for those on private pay. Funding continues for each child until he/she reaches kindergarten, as long as he/she remains at the designated childcare provider for the duration of their preschool tenure.

In addition to covering childcare costs, the BTS donor awards funding in quarterly deposits into a separate college fund created for each child. Even though deposits cease once the child enters kindergarten, they accrue interest for the duration of the child's grade school, middle school and high school years. Upon high school graduation, each child can then access that account for college expenses, in combination with any specific college scholarships or grants available.

Bridges to Success begins with the end in mind. Our donor knows that the foundations laid in preschool are the most critical in determining eventual college success. He then takes it a step further by turning obstacles into opportunities, increasing college success by taking away the burden of cost.

ASPIRE Program -Also referenced in the Training section of report

Aspire is a FREE, tiered, hybrid, teacher training program designed to guide and mentor entry-level teachers through the DCF 45-hour Introduction to Child Care Training course, along with an additional training on Professionalism and the Florida Birth to Four Standards.

Launched 9 years ago, Aspire was renamed, rebranded and revamped to more effectively tackle the preschool teacher shortage that hit the community shortly after the onset of COVID. Formerly known as REACH, Aspire is now offered in both in-person and virtual classes. The program is divided into tiered placement levels depending on the participant's teaching experience. One tier includes high school students who can now enroll in Aspire and work a paid preschool internship at the same time.

Led by a seasoned early childhood specialist, our Aspire instructor also serves as an early childhood career navigator for program participants, local preschool teachers and the community-at-large.

Since the rebranding in 2021, we've enrolled 80 participants. Seventy percent of participants hear about us through center directors, the other thirty percent through word of mouth, job fairs, webinars, etc.

Now, this program has been rebranded once again in 23-24, as ELC of Sarasota received the official designation of a registered Pre-Apprenticeship program which will incorporate the ASPIRE program going forward.

Since its inception, REACH/Aspire has had 157 graduates, many of whom are still working in Early Education. In fact, 36 graduates rolled right into completing their FCCPC., and at least one became a director of a child care facility.

EVALUATION OF DIRECT ENHANCEMENT SERVICES

Grade Level Reading Campaign, Two Gen Approach to end poverty, and ELC's role

Sarasota County continues to be a key participant in the *Suncoast Campaign for Grade-Level Reading*, which is a branch of the *Florida Campaign for Grade-Level Reading*. The goal is to help all children read on age-appropriate level by the time they reach third grade. This comprehensive campaign is a community-wide effort with multiple partners as well as a variety of programs that all work together to impact grade level reading outcomes. Spearheaded by The Patterson Foundation, the ELC works in partnership to coordinate and facilitate activities throughout the year to support parent education through various digital platforms and programs like Mind in the Making. A recent partnership includes incorporating the “This Book is Cool” initiative within ELC’s book distribution efforts, which began in 2020. The Patterson Foundation launched the *Suncoast Remake Learning Days* program and ELC was an active participant, with activities described in other sections of this report.

As part of this impactful effort, and in keeping with a Two-Generation approach to addressing poverty, the Community Foundation of Sarasota County is another entity investing time, money and resources to educational outreach programs. These programs tackle the school readiness gap by striving to prevent summer learning loss in four elementary school zones known for consistently low scores. The ELC works with our VPK programs to ensure families are aware of these critical programs and how to access them. We also partner with multiple agencies to help identify families who are not accessing traditional programs and assist them in taking advantage of the many locally funded programs in our community to offer employment and training opportunities in higher wage industries.

Summer Hunger Program

We are proud partners with our local food bank, All Faiths Food Bank, for several initiatives including the annual Campaign Against Summer Hunger. The initiative has become our community’s strongest line of defense against child hunger providing over 40,000 children meals in Sarasota and DeSoto Counties. For the summer of 2024, we had 23 participating childcare sites including many Family Childcare homes. Each site received numerous totes full of prepackaged foods for children and families to take as needed, a strong contribution to the collective community effort.

DATA SUMMARY

Data Summary

The following information is based on data collected from July 1, 2023_- June 30, 2024__.

CHILDREN SERVED IN SCHOOL READINESS

Number of children served in the school readiness program, by provider type, enumerated by age and eligibility priority category, reported as the number of children served during the month and the average participation throughout the month.

[For these data, see Appendix, Tab D.]

CHILD DISENROLLMENT

Total number of children disenrolled during the year and the reasons for disenrollment.

[Insert the table from Tab E from the Workbook.]

Reason for Disenrollment	Number of Children Disenrolled
Child care provider dismisses child due to child's behavior	3
Child care provider has closed for economic or other business reasons.	3
Child care setting provided too much stimulation for the child.	1
Child deceased.	1
Child has a duplicate record.	1
Child is no longer residing with the guardian who completed the initial application. New paperwork must be completed by new guardian.	8
Child poses safety risk to other children at program.	2
Client does not show up for redetermination.	57
Client failed to provide required documentation to maintain eligibility.	3
Client is eligible for services under a different funder (i.e., non funder 1).	7
Client is no longer eligible for services because the family income exceeds the allowable amount for eligibility.	23
Client moved out of the county in which funding is currently provided.	14
Client no longer has a valid purpose for care.	40
Custodian is involved in seasonal work (such as migrant or school district employees) and the child's enrollment is temporarily suspended while custodian is not working.	11
Parent declined Terms and Conditions	2
Parent or guardian lacks resources necessary to keep child in care.	2

DATA SUMMARY

Parent/guardian withdrew child from the program.	234
Provider dismissed child for noncompliance with the provider's attendance policy.	12
Provider dropped child from the provider's program.	20
Provider remains open, but no longer provides VPK or SR services.	3
Referring agency has terminated the referral.	1
The enrollment record was updated.	7
The next authorization period was approved.	5
Transfer to another provider record (even if the second record is owned by the same provider).	2
Total	462

PROVIDER TYPE

Total number of providers by provider type.

[Insert the table from Tab F from the Workbook.]

Provider Type	Total Providers	Offered SR Only	Offered VPK Only	Both
1. Licensed Private Centers	75	18	14	43
2. License-Exempt Centers	1	0	1	0
3. Large Family Child Care Home	6	4	0	2
4. Licensed Family Child Care Home	11	11	0	0
6. Private School	13	2	10	1
7. Public School	4	0	4	0

SCHOOL READINESS PROVIDER REVOCATION

List of any school readiness program provider, by type, whose eligibility to deliver the school readiness program is revoked, including a brief description of the state or federal violation that resulted in the revocation.

[For these data, see Appendix, Tab G.]

VOLUNTARY PREKINDERGARTEN PROVIDER REVOCATION

List of any voluntary prekindergarten program provider, by type, whose eligibility to deliver the voluntary prekindergarten program is revoked, including a brief description of the state violation that resulted in the revocation.

[For these data, see Appendix, Tab H.]

DATA SUMMARY

CHILDREN SERVED BY PROVIDER

The total number of children served in each provider facility.

[For these data, see Appendix, Tab I.]

FISCAL SUMMARY

Fiscal Summary

During the 2023_- 2024_ fiscal year, the coalition's total SR, SR Local Match, VPK, and Other Local Revenues operating budget was \$ 15,383,714.00 .

PROGRAM FUNDS (REVENUES)

Segregation of School Readiness Program funds, SR Local Match funds, Voluntary Prekindergarten Education Program funds, and other local revenues available to the coalition.

School Readiness (SR) Program funds	\$ 10,682,272.59
SR Local Match funds	\$292,128.00
Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) Education Program funds	\$4,538,492.70
Other Local Revenues (including in-kind)	\$565,577.93
Total	\$16,136,7983.94

DETAILS OF EXPENDITURES BY FUND SOURCE

Details of expenditures by fund source, including total expenditures for administrative activities, quality activities, nondirect services, and direct services for children.

	Administrative Activities	Quality Activities	Nondirect Services	Direct Services for Children	Total
SR Program	\$273,482.63	\$1,612,508.65	\$476,951.64	\$8,399,623.75	\$10,762,566.67
SR Local Match Funders	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$292,128.00	\$292,128.00
VPK Program	\$119,305.93	\$0	\$0	\$4,416,242.67	\$4,535,548.60
Other Local Revenues	\$18,983.04	\$142,612.92	\$69,583.87	\$334,398.10	\$535,577.93
Total	\$411,771.60	\$1,755,121.57	\$546,535.51	\$13,150,556.64	\$16,125,821.20

COALITION STAFF AND RELATED EXPENDITURES

Total number of coalition staff and the related expenditures for salaries and benefits. For any subcontracts, the total number of contracted staff and the related expenditures for salaries and benefits.

	Number of Staff	Expenditures for Salary and Benefits
Early Learning Coalition Staff	20	\$ 1,260,790.19
Subrecipient Staff	0	\$0
Total	20	\$ 1,260,790.19