

# CONNECTIONS

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE QUARTERLY

May 2008

Volume 3, Issue 1

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## Professional Development

This issue features one of the most important components of quality early learning: professional development.

Well-trained staff should be the primary indicator for the delivery of quality services. The professional level of staff is directly proportional to the quality of services provided.

We honor the efforts made in the field to facilitate affordable educational opportunities for early learning staff.

This year is full of exciting national and statewide events for early learning staff such as the National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies annual symposium and institutes and regional trainings organized by the Agency for Workforce Innovation. We hope you enjoy reading news and personal stories from our field while at the same time learning about educational opportunities for all. ♦

## The Early Childhood Association of Florida

by Suzanne Gellens, M.S. Executive Director, Early Childhood Association of Florida

The Early Childhood Association of Florida (ECA of FL) is the largest professional organization for people who work in the early care and education field in Florida. Our 3,500 members work with thousands of children and their families in for-profit, non-profit, public, faith based programs, corporate childcare, family childcare homes, as well as post secondary educational institutions and agencies that serve young children.

Organized in 1955, the mission of the Early Childhood Association of Florida is to support early childhood professionals through leadership, advocacy, and professional development opportunities. Our vision is that all young children in Florida have access to quality early learning opportunities.

As the state affiliate of both the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) and the

Southern Early Childhood Association (SECA), our members are comprised of 15 local affiliate chapters and 11 community-at-large chapters that offer a variety of programs in their community. Members receive a variety of resources including three respected journals: *Young Children*, *Dimensions of Early Learning*, and *Children Our Concern*.

All members have the advantage of receiving local, state, regional, and national news and information on advocacy efforts as well as a wide variety of professional development opportunities. Our advocacy efforts are focused on increasing the quality of early care and education and helping to elevate the provider to a position of respect. We believe that early care providers should earn an equitable salary that reflects the

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importance of their work. We promote what is good and right for both teachers and children through professional development conferences, publications, and community events.

ECA of FL participates in Florida's Children's Week and NAEYC's Week of the Young Child. Our affiliates sponsor local events to promote both celebrations. We work hard to collaborate with other early childhood organizations in the state.

ECA of FL offers a variety of professional development presentations throughout the state such as workshops based on the ECA of FL resource, *Activities That Build the Young Children's Brain*, NAEYC Accreditation Seminars, and online courses that include an art course and Book Club of NAEYC publications. These state-of-the-art online courses offer in-service credits and continuing education units (CEU).

More than 2,500 early care and education professionals attend the annual ECA of FL Conference held in September in Orlando to hear from national experts in the early childhood field. Participants have a choice of more than 100 workshops.

Seventy-five vendors display the most recent quality materials available. Education paired with networking makes this state conference an exciting experience!

Our members are eligible for a large variety of scholarships including educational scholarships, NAEYC Accreditation grants, Membership Scholarships, Conference Scholarships, Emergency Disaster Relief, and our newest scholarship that helps convert the Florida Child Care Professional Credential (FCCPC) (formerly Child Development Associate Equivalency-CDAE) to the Child Development Associate National Credential (CDA).

Teaching young children and providing quality child care is truly a noble worthy profession. The Early Childhood Association of Florida meets the needs of all early care and education professionals in their chosen profession.

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[www.ecaoffl.org](http://www.ecaoffl.org) ♦



## VPK Teachers and Professional Development by Noelle Bee, VPK Coordinator

Voluntary Prekindergarten teachers are a critical component of a child's preparation for success in kindergarten and later years in school. Training opportunities for VPK teachers are often abundant and focus on many topics such as implementation of standards, curriculum, and assessment. Florida is the leader in quality training methods such as face-to-face sessions and online delivery. This is the perfect time—for those of us who create and facilitate training opportunities—to keep in mind the end goal.

When I was a preschool director, my teachers came to expect that icebreakers and other games would be a part of our monthly staff meeting agenda. A scavenger hunt would help staff find the items that were missing from their first aid kits. A jeopardy game would reinforce concepts that we discussed such as developmental milestones and items that should be included in a child's portfolio. Since I am a kinesthetic learner, I incorporated that approach in my training techniques for staff development. We sang songs, created lesson plans, and made play dough (those were great meetings). What I didn't realize I was missing opportunities for intentional training.

In the book, *The Intentional Teacher*, Ann Epstein defines intentionality as *acting purposefully, with a goal in mind and a plan for accomplishing it*. Intentional acts originate from careful thought and are accompanied by consideration of their potential effects. With the focus on intentional teaching, we would be remiss if we didn't focus on intentional professional development training as well.

Intentional training should include engaging activities, thoughtful questioning, and feedback. As outlined in the concept of intentional teaching, feedback is a critical component to ensure fidelity of implementation. With the technological age, an email can be sent to participants to

share a thought and jog their memory on some of the concepts covered in training. One idea could be as simple as a suggestion for documenting children's work and adding it to a child's portfolio as feedback after attending training on development assessment.

Intentional training is not a new concept and is widely used in many Fortune 500 companies. The legislation that guides the implementation of the VPK program has already set the high standards of a developmentally appropriate curriculum, trained instructors, and a focus on early literacy skills.

Voluntary Prekindergarten has challenged early childhood teachers to focus on what children should know and be able to do at the end of their prekindergarten experience. The revision of the VPK Education Standards and School Readiness Standards for children ages three to five years old will provide new milestones for teachers to use while planning activities for children in their care. These activities will also provide an opportunity for professional development staff to re-evaluate training opportunities for preschool teachers. We can make sure we meet those expectations by crafting our training to fully prepare teachers to help all children succeed regardless of their circumstances.

This is an exciting time in early childhood education. The inclusion of intentional training will ensure that Florida's children receive the skills they need to become the leaders of tomorrow.

For those of us who still love games at staff meetings, icebreakers at trainings, and special activities during courses, intentionality will help participants understand the meaning behind the work. Intentional training will help us communicate what we've known all along: a teacher can never have too many opportunities to hone her/his craft. ♦





## School Readiness Helps!

*Article submitted by Elizabeth Moore,  
Operations Director, Early Learning  
Coalition of Marion County*

“Because of assistance through the Early Learning Coalition of Marion County, we are able to afford to send our daughter to our pre-school of choice.

We have seen a noticeable difference in her intellectual and social development since she began this early learning program. We are thankful to the coalition for having a program that helps provide an equal learning opportunity for our daughter.”♦



“I am writing in regard to the benefits of the Waterford Reading Program. My son Anthony used the program at Tiny Treast during the 2006-2007 VPK school year. This program created an enthusiasm for reading as well as providing an essential foundation for success at the elementary school level.



## CCR&R Helps!

*Article submitted by Elizabeth Moore,  
Operations Director, Early Learning  
Coalition of Marion County*

I received a call from a grandparent who had just received custody of her 4-year-old grandson. She was frantic because she was starting a new job in a couple of days and did not know what her child care options were.

I referred her to our Child Care Resource & Referral Network, which helped her locate quality child care. Then we were able to enroll her grandson in VPK. When she started her new job, the coalition was able to enroll her child in the School Readiness program so that she could continue to work! Karen and her grandson are thriving now in their new life together with the help of the coalition and the early learning services we were able to provide! ♦

## CCR&R Helps!

*Article submitted by Ana Verez,  
Family Services Coordinator, CNBB  
Episcopal Children's Services*

Cheryl Fisher is a Clay County client who has three children with acute and life threatening health problems. During the enrollment appointment, Dawn Silvius, our Family Service Specialist, provided Cheryl with community agency referrals.

After the CCR&R appointment, Cheryl called the resources and made appointments with different community agencies that helped her with the payment of her rent and electric bill. She called back Episcopal Children's Services and thanked Dawn for giving her the referrals and for spending time with her. She was glad to meet a wonderful woman like Dawn who really cared for her family. In addition, she felt that her family had a chance at something better thanks to the services provided. ♦

## VPK Helps!

*Article submitted by Anthony Harchick, 2nd grade teacher,  
Levy County, Florida*

Anthony enjoyed the computer activities and journal writing components of the program. He was also excited to use the DVDs and ‘Little readers’ at home.

When my son entered kindergarten he scored well on his screening test

and above average on his DIBELS© reading test.

I attribute much of his success to the foundation that was built by his teachers implementing the Waterford Program. ♦

## Policy/Legislative Update

by Brittany Birken, Deputy Director

I want to take a few moments to share a summary of legislation passed this session that may impact the Agency for Workforce Innovation and the Early Learning Community. The following items passed both chambers of the legislature and are awaiting signature by the Governor, at which time they will become law.

### House Bill (HB) 879-Relating to Early Learning

Allows the Agency for Workforce Innovation to adopt rules that would permit VPK providers to utilize substitute instructors who are not credentialed VPK instructors under statute in limited circumstances.

Provides that accrediting associations that are recognized under s.1002.55(3)(b)1.-2., Florida Statute have written accrediting standards that meet the state's licensing requirements and document at least one on-site visit of the provider or school before accreditation can be granted for the VPK program.

Improves quality by ensuring that child care centers that are license exempt are accredited by an accrediting association that at a minimum conducts one on-site visit and has health and safety standards that meet the state's requirements.

Authorizes the 31 early learning coalitions to utilize telecommunications and/or videoconferencing including establishing a quorum to conduct meetings in a more efficient manner.

Clarifies early learning laws by renumbering the Child Care Resource and Referral requirements and the Child Care Executive Partnership program to chapter 411, Florida Statutes.

### House Bill (HB) 5001 General Appropriations Act

Continued current year appropriation level for the Child Care and Development Block Grant Trust Fund

- ◆ \$500,000 ELIS Qualified Expenditure Category appropriation
- ◆ \$9.9 million reduction of TANF funding
- ◆ \$7.1 million reduction of state funds (includes ELIS reduction)
- ◆ \$3.0 million minimum appropriation for the Teacher Education and Compensation Helps Program (TEACH)
- ◆ \$1.4 million appropriation for the Home Instruction Program for Pre-School Youngsters (HIPPY)

- ◆ \$354.3 million appropriation for the Voluntary Prekindergarten Program
- ◆ Proviso language to continue the Gold Seal Quality Care Initiative
- ◆ Proviso language requiring a six percent local match for working poor eligible participants in the School Readiness Program
- ◆ Proviso language allowing the designation of matching funds for the Child Care Executive Partnership Program

### **VPK Improvement Process**

On February 18, 2008, the Final 2006-07 VPK Provider Kindergarten Readiness Rates were made available to the public by the Department of Education. On February 19, 2008 the State Board of Education set the minimum 2006-07 VPK Provider Readiness rate at 211.

VPK providers have 21 days to acknowledge their status as a low-performing provider and then 30 days from their acknowledgement date to submit an improvement plan. Coalitions or school districts have 10 days to approve improvement plans. The entire improvement process is online at [www.ImproveVPK.org](http://www.ImproveVPK.org).

There were 593 low-performing school year providers, 96 low-performing summer providers, and 157 providers who fell below the minimum readiness rate two years in a row. Year Two low-performing providers are required to use a DOE-approved curriculum list as part of their improvement plan. A list is available at:

<http://www.fldoe.org/earlylearning/curric.asp#curraprovalprocesslpp>. ◆

## Coordinator's Corner

by Gerie Nasche, CCR&R Program Supervisor

If you are a Child Care Resource and Referral professional you may be asking yourself, "Is there a career path for me?"

CCR&R professionals have definite opportunities for career advancement. Many CCR&R professionals, including myself, entered the world of Child Care Resource & Referral as a licensed family child care provider or center teacher/director. This entry point into the early learning field can transition into working in an early learning coalition or agency as a CCR&R Specialist.

A CCR&R Specialist can advance to a management position as a CCR&R Coordinator, Director, or other position in their early learning coalition or agency. Many experienced Coordinators have achieved staff positions at the Agency for Workforce Innovation's Office of Early Learning, CCR&R State Network Office, in the areas of Child Care Resource & Referral, Voluntary Prekindergarten, School Readiness, Inclusion and other departments.

One of our recent staff persons at the Network Office, Karen Moon, began working as a local CCR&R Coordinator in Pasco County. She was selected by the National Association of Resource & Referral Agencies (NACCRRRA) as an emerging leader in the first NACCRRRA Leadership Development program. In the Fall of 2007, Karen assumed a position with NACCRRRA in Washington, DC, as the Southeast Technical Assistance Representative for NACCRRRA. Karen's career path is a great example of the possibilities that exist for those working in the world of CCR&R.

NACCRRRA feels strongly that recognizing and mentoring leaders is a key strategy for the continued growth and influence of CCR&R as a field. The NACCRRRA Board of Directors believes that many of our future leaders are already working in our State Networks or local CCR&R's. The three-year Leadership Development program is designed for a select group of CCR&R leaders and includes a week-long orientation; two two-week internships (one at the state/local level and one at the national level); and a Leadership Development Project designed by participants. This project is carried out with the assistance of a mentor and attendance at NACCRRRA Symposia and State Network Leadership Institutes.

There are six leaders in the Class of 2010, and I am very excited and happy to announce that one of Florida's own, Vicki Pugh, from the Early Learning Coalition of

Escambia, was just selected at the recent NACCRRRA Annual Symposium as one of three Leaders of the Class of 2011.

Please join me in congratulating Vicki and the Early Learning Coalition of Escambia in this major



### National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies

[www.naccrra.org](http://www.naccrra.org)

#### 2008 Leadership and Management Institute

July 8-11, 2008  
San Diego, California

#### Professional Development Institute

September 22-26, 2008  
Pittsburg, PA

#### State Network Leadership Institute

October 27-30, 2008  
Charleston, SC

## The National Professional Development Center on Inclusion

*Adapted with permission from materials provided by the National Professional Development Center, March, 2008*

Today, while many preschool classrooms have at least one child with a disability or special need, early childhood teachers often have little or no training in educating and caring for them. The National Professional Development Center on Inclusion (NPDCI) is working with states to help achieve an integrated professional development system that supports high quality inclusion.

NPDCI's work has several unique features:

- Based on a theoretical and conceptual framework related to systems change.
- Aligns professional development with teacher and program standards and child and family outcomes.
- Relies on an evidence-based practice approach to professional development.
- Serves as a catalyst to bring together existing professional development initiatives.

### NPDCI's Professional Development Community of Practice

As the early childhood field attempts to overcome traditional boundaries and provide cross-sector professional development on inclusion, what challenges do systems face? A new online discussion provides the opportunity to consult with colleagues about what's working and what's not. Share your experiences and learn from others at the Professional Development Community of Practice discussion area: [www1.fpg.unc.edu/community/npdci/pd/](http://www1.fpg.unc.edu/community/npdci/pd/)

### Subscribe to NPDCI Newsletter and Updates

Receive periodic email updates from NPDCI on the latest events and new resources. Visit the website to subscribe: [www.fpg.unc.edu/~npdci](http://www.fpg.unc.edu/~npdci)

**We're on the web!**  
[www.flready.org](http://www.flready.org)

### Resources available from NPDCI

- *"What Do We Mean by Professional Development in the Early Childhood Field?"*  
A new concept paper that offers a definition and framework for professional development in the early childhood field. Access this document and join the discussion at: [www1.fpg.unc.edu/community/npdci/pd/](http://www1.fpg.unc.edu/community/npdci/pd/)
- *Infusing Evidence-Based Practice into Professional Development*  
This article from Frank Porter Graham's Early Development illustrates how NPDCI is weaving an evidence-based approach throughout the project. Available at: [www.fpg.unc.edu/~npdci/products](http://www.fpg.unc.edu/~npdci/products)
- *Research Synthesis Points on Early Childhood Inclusion*  
This document offers a summary of key conclusions or "synthesis points" drawn from a review of the literature on early childhood inclusion. Available at: [www.fpg.unc.edu/~npdci/products](http://www.fpg.unc.edu/~npdci/products)
- *Professional Development Activity: Looking at the Data on Inclusion*  
Use this activity to share key research points related to early childhood inclusion and to facilitate discussion among participants on their reactions to the research synthesis points and application to their work. Available at: [www.fpg.unc.edu/~npdci/products](http://www.fpg.unc.edu/~npdci/products)
- *Recommendations for Meaningfully Involving Families in State Planning Meetings*  
Available at: [www.fpg.unc.edu/~npdci/products](http://www.fpg.unc.edu/~npdci/products)
- *Guidance for Technical Assistance Providers on Working with States*  
Available at: [www.fpg.unc.edu/~npdci/products](http://www.fpg.unc.edu/~npdci/products)
- *Creating Participatory Meetings*  
Available at: [www.fpg.unc.edu/~npdci/products](http://www.fpg.unc.edu/~npdci/products)



## Children's Week 2008

by Lisette Levy, Communication and Training Coordinator



**The hallmark of Children's Week each year is the thousands of construction paper cut-outs of children's hands that adorn the Capitol Rotunda.**

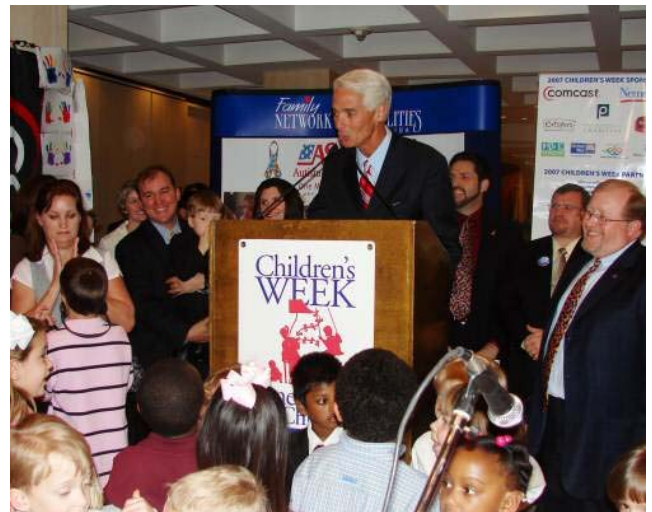
Children's Week symbolizes collaboration that exists in Florida of over 80 non-profit and corporate partners and the Florida Legislature, to promote the health, safety, and well-being of our children and families. This week, occurring during the legislative session, is powerful in providing the opportunity for children, families, and children's advocates from all over the state to speak on the important issues that affect children in Florida.

During Children's Week thousands of parents, children, professionals, advocates, and community leaders celebrate and share valuable knowledge and information about children's issues across Florida and at our state Capitol. Numerous press conferences and other events highlight the work of children's advocates, and this year Maryann Barry was presented with the Chiles Advocacy Award. This award is given to a Floridian who has dedicated his or her life to improving the lives of children and families, and who has successfully engaged others to promote policies and programs that benefit those children and families. The recipient of the annual Chiles Advocacy Award exemplifies the integrity, dedication, and commitment to improve the lives of Florida's children and families for which we all strive.

It is important to bring the meaning of this week into our daily lives. For us, those in the early learning community, Children's Week happens every week. Whether you are an agency employee, a provider, a parent volunteer, or a public school administrator, you collaborate with other early learning colleagues and try to serve families to the best of your ability.

For the Agency for Workforce Innovation, this collaboration is translated into the work that Early Learning Coalitions (ELCs) accomplish everyday. The coalitions help children in their community by offering direct services or services through their contractors. For example, at the Miami Beach Community Health Center, The Healthy Steps Program serves new mothers with babies ages birth to three-years-old, by educating them about literacy, child development, safety, and community resources. In collaboration with the ELC of Miami Dade and Monroe Counties, this training program has been even more successful. The coalition has helped to educate and support parents in their path to independence. Over the past two years, the coalition's support efforts have included talking to parent support groups and providing printed information and resources that guide the families through selecting child care. Through their contractor, the coalition has offered child care resource and referral services and has educated hundreds of families throughout the counties.

This year Children's Week was very successful in bringing advocates and policy makers together to discuss children's issues and in opening up lines of communication. Our collective work is pivotal in the success that many families achieve, but we must continue this critical work so children's issues are not neglected. In addition, we must collaborate in our efforts to help policy makers understand the importance of supporting children and their families on their paths to success. ♦



**Governor Charlie Crist delivering a speech during Children's Week.**

## Florida Afterschool Network: Publishes Quality Afterschool Standards

by Larry Pintacuda, Project Manager, Florida Afterschool Network

The Florida Afterschool Network (FAN), a Charles Stewart Mott funded grant project, was established in 2006 to provide unified leadership to advocate for the development, enhancement and sustainability of innovative, high quality afterschool programs and policies statewide.

FAN's most recent publication is the February debut of the *Florida Standards for Quality Afterschool Programs*. These standards define the principles and practices that lead to the delivery of quality programming for elementary age children. The standards provide a framework for the development of a caring, dynamic, stimulating, and safe environment for children and youth. Research-based outcomes for such programs include: children and youth who are connected and engaged; parents who feel their children are safe and secure; and families who have a sense of pride and ownership of the program.

FAN recognizes that each afterschool program is unique with varying missions and philosophies, and serves wide and diverse populations, ethnicities, age ranges, interests, and values. The standards are not intended to dictate policy and practice. They are intended to suggest and offer a strong foundation for quality programming.

The standards are organized in seven (7) categories.

- Administration and Organization
- Program Management and Staff
- Communication and Interaction
- Program Structure and Activities
- Health, Safety, and Nutrition
- Program Environment
- Family and Community Involvement

Each category begins with a guiding principle that defines the intent of the category, followed by quality elements. The elements are broad based and allow for, encourage, and celebrate the uniqueness of each program.

As part of the development process, FAN recognized the value of obtaining input from those who directly provide afterschool services. Five (5) regional workgroups were held and over 60 practitioners attended. Each proposed standard was discussed and revisions to initial drafts were made. Because the review process involved thorough input and deliberation, FAN is convinced that the standards represent the best thinking in the field and clearly outline what a quality program looks like.

Implementation is voluntary. FAN hopes the standards are of such value that programs will want to implement some or all of the elements. FAN also envisions parents and guardians utilizing the document as a guide or tool when selecting an afterschool program for their children.

For your copy of the *Florida Standards for Quality Afterschool Programs*, visit [www.myfan.org](http://www.myfan.org). Call (850) 402-5437 or email [lpintacuda@floridacsc.org](mailto:lpintacuda@floridacsc.org). Brochures are available in quantity at no cost. ♦

### Are You Ready? Digital Television Transition

*Adapted from U.S. Department of Health and Human Services*

HHS has agreed to assist the Federal Communications Commission with a national campaign to disseminate information about the digital television transition that will start in approximately one year.

As part of the transition, the federal government is offering U.S. households up to two \$40 coupons to help with the cost of converter boxes, which will allow analog TVs to continue receiving broadcasts after the February 17, 2009 switch to digital broadcast-only service.

We have added a section with links to information on the switch, why the government is involved, and the coupon program. It is on the lower portion of our home page, <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cse/>. ♦

### WANTED

We are looking for CCR&R, VPK, Inclusion, and School Readiness stories, questions, and best practices from the field to publish in *Connections* please e-mail Lissette Levy, CCR&R Training & Communications Coordinator, Agency for Workforce Innovation's Office of Early Learning at: [Lissette.Levy@flaawi.com](mailto:Lissette.Levy@flaawi.com)

## Provider Technical Assistance: Free Spanish Infant-Toddler Language and Early Literacy Activities

*Developed by Angela Notari-Syverson, Ph.D, and Judy Challoner, M.S., The development of these materials was supported by Grant H324M020084 from the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs*

The Spanish language version of the birth-to-three parent-child activity materials are now available for downloading on the Washington Learning Systems website. The development of these materials was supported by Grant H324M020084 from the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs.

These materials include twenty (20) home and community activities for adults and children birth to three that encourage early language and literacy development. These activities are appropriate for children with disabilities as well as typically developing children.

Each of the twenty (20) activities includes an activity description, and hints for making the activity fun and developmentally appropriate. In addition to the activities, you can download an activity checklist that helps parents and caregivers notice their children's skills, and also cues adults to examine and increase their own interactions with children.

The materials are specifically designed to address the three key skills of (1) language development, (2) sounds and rhythms, and (3) general book and print awareness.

The files are in PDF format to allow easy and secure downloading. They include:

- A brief introduction to the materials
- Activities and hints for adapting them to the child's specific needs
- Activity checklists for self-evaluation by the adult

The materials are made available by Angela Notari-Syverson and colleagues, and may be copied and distributed as long as they are not sold.

To download materials go to [www.wlearning.com](http://www.wlearning.com) and click on the purple button that says "Free Parent Education Handouts" on the home page.

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### A Leap of Faith *by Grace L. Geller, Executive Director, A Children's Carousel, Weston, FL*

You've visited all the schools, asked all the questions, and selected a preschool for your child. All summer you mentioned the upcoming event to your preschooler or toddler. Painstaking effort has gone into leaving your child with trusted adults, allowing them to adjust to your comings and goings. Your child listened attentively as you read all the storybooks about the first day of school. Everything is prepared to ensure a successful transition into a preschool setting.

As the new school year quickly approaches you notice a dull ache in the pit of your stomach. You have second thoughts, more questions: *Why* should I entrust my precious child to strangers? *What if* they get sick or hurt? Is my child too young? Is this the right school? Didn't I choose to stay home with my child so that I could provide a perfect environment? Didn't I stop working to raise my children? *My time?* What *is* this glaring feeling inside me? *Anxiety? Joy?*

Take comfort from an active preschool director. What you are experiencing is universal. Every fall, new parents and children begin their first preschool experience with similar feelings. The first day of school is good, even great! You wonder; why was I concerned?

Then it happens: The second day of school! The dawdling begins, the mystery tummy ache, anything to delay your departure. You don't give it much thought and begin your journey. Approaching the school the real fussing begins. Walking to the door your child develops super human skills; capable of flying into your arms and clinging frantically around your neck. They say, "I like school." You wonder, "Where did this outburst come from?"

*(Continues on page 11)*

(Continued from page 11 "Leap of Faith")

Welcome to your first preschool experiential lesson. "I don't want to go! I did this yesterday!" Your thoughts are racing. What terrible thing could have happened? Should we go home?

You forge ahead, leaving your child screaming in the teacher's arms. Calling the school an hour later, you learn your child has quieted down and is watching other classmates. They never really relax in class that day. Quietly (some not so quiet) holding their fragile psyche together.

To make this adjustment, you must first understand a child's emotional perspective. Initially, they trust no one! They do not trust that you will return. They do not trust the teachers to understand them, anticipate their needs, hold them when they are hurt, and most of all protect them from harm. These are just a few issues they will be tackling over the next two weeks. Correct, two weeks! Children need approximately two weeks to develop the trust necessary to relax and really have fun. Curiously, parents require about the same length of time.

How can you help? Setting a routine will make this transition much easier. Arrive five minutes before class begins. Help your child put their belongings away. Say good-bye reminding them that you will return after a scheduled event such as lunch or nap. Then, walk out. Don't look back. The teacher will comfort your child, with the promise of your return.

When you display confidence children receive this subtle message; "My Mommy and, Daddy believe this school is good." Remember to **be on time** for arrival and dismissal. No one likes to enter a classroom already in progress. No one wants to be left, waiting. When adults behave conscientiously, most children evolve from home to school positively. Considering the length of time, two-weeks is a very short period to learn so much. You might even be rewarded with a really great hand-painted, over-glued, wrinkly work of art to display on the refrigerator. Whatever you do, don't ask what it is! ♦

## The Florida Early Care and Education Professional Development Initiative

by Alisa Ghazvini, Assistant Project Director, Florida Quality Initiative

The Florida Early Care and Education Professional Development Initiative (PDI) was launched by Agency for Workforce Innovation's Office of Early Learning in January 2007 with the formation of a steering committee of early childhood leaders and experts representing state agencies, higher education, provider associations, training and technical assistance organizations, coalitions, and other early childhood community representatives. Members made a long-term commitment to participating in the work of building a system of professional development supports in Florida, recognizing the complexity of the process and the need for a comprehensive system design.

The vision of the steering committee is that:

*Florida will develop and implement a professional development system for the early education and care field (focusing on the education and training of practitioners serving children birth through age 5). The system framework will include funding, core professional knowledge, qualifications and credentials quality assurance, and mechanisms for access and outreach.*

The steering committee also adopted the following guiding principles:

- ♦ Provide a continuum of training and follow-up activities
- ♦ Systematically design, sequence, and implement activities
- ♦ Embed opportunities for ongoing evaluation
- ♦ Build on a clearly articulated philosophical framework and on a core body of knowledge
- ♦ Tie to a system of licensure, credentialing, and certification

Over the course of the last year and a half, the PDI has utilized national experts and resources, explored professional development systems in other states, examined the excellent system-building work completed in Palm Beach, and reviewed the work completed several years ago here in Florida, *Pathways to Professionalism*. Members adopted a strategic plan that outlines a long-term plan of action for moving forward in each system area – core competencies, articulation, quality assurances, and outreach and accessibility. Recognizing that all parts of the system development rest on what teachers should know and be able to do, steering committee members elected to begin work by convening a Core Competencies Workgroup.

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The Core Competencies Workgroup began meeting in November by conference call. Members of the workgroup included early care and education providers from numerous different settings and representatives of state agencies, coalitions, higher education, and other early childhood associations and organizations.

Members examined the Palm Beach Core Competencies, the Pathways to Professionalism Core Competencies, and core competencies from several states. After careful review and consideration, workgroup members recommended five levels for the career lattice and an integration of the work of Palm Beach and Pathways. Efforts are currently underway to write the competencies based on these recommendations.

The next meeting of PDI Steering Committee is scheduled for May 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> in Palm Beach. In addition to reviewing the work of the Core Competencies Workgroup, members will have the opportunity to examine the Palm Beach Professional Development System first-hand. It is anticipated that core competencies will be finalized during 2008 and work on quality assurance issues will commence. For additional information, please contact:

Alisa Ghazvini at 850-545-7716 or

[aghazvini@hotmail.com](mailto:aghazvini@hotmail.com). ♦

## Child Care Training Information Center

by Bonnie Baker, Director of Child Care Training Information Center,  
The Children's Forum, Inc.

The Department of Children and Families implemented the statewide Child Care Training Information Center (CCTIC) July 1, 2005.

The purpose of CCTIC is to provide a single, consistent source of information on child care training requirements and certification and to provide technical assistance and support to potential and current child care facility directors and staff, family child care home providers, child care licensing staff, local training coordinators, early learning coalitions, and the general public.

The Department of Children and Families contracts with the Children's Forum for the operation of the CCTIC. The Center operates Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. (EST) at 1-888-352-2842.

Questions may be sent via email to:

[CTIC@thechildrensforum.com](mailto:CTIC@thechildrensforum.com). ♦

## Child Care Training and Accreditation Provider Evaluation Services

by Beverly Esposito, Ph.D., Vice President of Professional Development, The Children's Forum, Inc.

Having trouble getting "CDAE" out of your vocabulary? You're not alone, old habits die hard! But, believe it or not, we've all had over eight months to get that term out of our heads and off our websites. Effective April 2007, the Department of Children and Families (DCF) made extensive revisions to the Florida Administrative Code in an effort to streamline the credentialing process and enhance training programs by changing/raising requirements to more closely reflect national standards.

At that time, the Florida Child Care Professional Credential (FCCPC) program was developed to provide greater availability and accessibility of training programs to meet the diverse needs of child care providers throughout the state.

In October 2007, the Department of Children and Families selected the Children's Forum as a vendor to

conduct evaluations and make approvals of FCCPC applications for recognition as Department-approved FCCPC training program providers.

The Children's Forum also performs a similar function for the Gold Seal Quality Care Program. In this capacity, the Forum serves as an objective, third party evaluator of new and renewal applications for both of these quality enhancement programs. Entitled "Child Care Training and Accreditation Provider Evaluation Services" (CCTAPES), the new program under the Children's Forum began on October 22, 2007 under the direction of Christian Winterbottom, M.S.

We look forward to working with Florida's FCCPC programs as we all seek to enhance the development of our early care and education workforce. ♦

## AWI's Office of Early Learning Staffing Update

by Stacy Howard, Consumer Affairs Manger

After a national search, Brittany Birken, Ph.D., was appointed Director of the Office of Early Learning within the Agency for Workforce Innovation (AWI).



Brittany brings a wealth of information, experience, and dedication to her new role as Director of the Office of Early Learning. She earned her Ph.D. in child development from Florida State University and has served at every level of the early learning service delivery system. She has worked with children in classrooms and care settings, has contributed to the field as a researcher, and has worked in many program and policy areas such as coordinating inclusion and Child Care Resource & Referral projects.

Brittany has been with the Agency since 2005 in several capacities: Program Administrator, Assistant Director, and most recently as Interim Director, all within the Office of Early Learning.

"I am thrilled to have such a talented and dedicated leader in this key position," said Monesia T. Brown, Agency Director. "Her enthusiasm, training, and depth of knowledge are the perfect match for this vital role."

As Director of the Office of Early Learning, Brittany leads a staff of professionals who work to support Florida's early learning systems through the Agency's School Readiness, Child Care Resource & Referral, and Voluntary Prekindergarten Education programs. She also serves as an Agency liaison to the state's 31 local Early Learning Coalitions, as well as our state partners, the Florida Department of Education, and the Florida Department of Children and Families.

"Working in the field of early learning means that I have opportunities every day to work with the most dedicated, progressive professionals throughout the state," Brittany stated. "We are making incredible strides toward our goals of ensuring that every child and every family has access to quality early learning programs. This is an exciting time for Florida, and I'm looking forward to all of the work ahead as we join together on behalf of the children and families we serve."

AWI is pleased to announce that Matt Guse is the new Assistant Director of the Office of Early Learning.



"We are so very pleased to have Matt join our staff in this role," said Dr. Birken. "He brings a strong understanding of public administration and service that will be meaningful for the continued development of the early learning system. He is also passionate about quality early learning opportunities for young children because he has worked with, and on behalf of, youth who may have had different life experiences if given the right start in life."

Prior to accepting his new position, Matt was the Deputy Education Director for the Florida Department of Juvenile Justice where he worked closely with the Department of Education to ensure that youth in the care of the Department received quality education in a safe environment.

Matt has previously managed contracts for Kids Central Inc., the community-based care agency responsible for all foster care and adoption in Marion, Citrus, Sumter, Lake, and Hernando Counties. Additionally, Matt has been an Assistant Director with the Citrus, Levy, and Marion County Workforce Board, where he was responsible for a Workforce Investment Act (WIA) funded school-to-work program located in four local high schools. Matt is a veteran of the United States Navy and a graduate of the University of Central Florida.

Matt's responsibilities will include the coordination of communication and collaboration among office management staff, state agency partners, legislators and their staff, professional organizations, and early learning partners. In addition, Matt will review, analyze, and oversee organizational activities and data to plan and improve the operation of the Office of Early Learning. ♦

## Upcoming Events

### State Conferences

#### Family Café

##### 10<sup>th</sup> Annual Family Café Conference

June 13-15, 2008

Orlando, FL

<http://www.familycafe.net>

#### Florida Family Child Care Home Association

##### 16<sup>th</sup> Annual Family Child Care Conference

June 24-29, 2008

Clearwater Beach, FL

<http://www.familychildcare.org>

#### Florida Association Child Care Management 2008 Annual Conference

July 10-12, 2008

Orlando, FL

<http://www.faccm.org>

#### One Goal Summer Conference

July 16-18, 2008

Tampa, FL

<http://onegoalsummerconference.org>

#### Early Childhood Association of Florida

September 25-28, 2008

Orlando, FL

<http://www.ecaoffl.org>

### National Conferences

#### National Association for the Education of Young Children

##### 17<sup>th</sup> Annual Professional Development Conference

June 8-11, 2008

New Orleans, LA

<http://www.naeyc.org>

#### National Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center 8<sup>th</sup> National Early Childhood Inclusion Institute

July 22-24, 2008

Chapel Hill, NC

<http://www.nectac.org>

#### National Black Child Development Institute 38<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference

October 26-28, 2008

Atlanta, GA

<http://www.nbcdi.org>

#### Division of Early Childhood

##### 24<sup>th</sup> Annual International Conference for Young Children with Special Needs and Their Families

October 27-30, 2008

Minneapolis, MN

<http://www.dec-sped.org>

#### National Association for the Education of Young Children

##### Annual Conference and Expo

November 5-8, 2008

Dallas, TX

<http://www.naeyc.org>

#### Office of Special Education Programs National Early Childhood Conference

December 8-10, 2008

Washington, DC

[www.naccp.org](http://www.naccp.org)

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## Children and Youth Cabinet

On July 11, 2007, Governor Charlie Crist created the Children and Youth Cabinet. The cabinet consists of 20 members whose work touches the lives of young children and youth. The Children and Youth Cabinet has held five meetings since the inaugural meeting October 1, 2007. The focus on the Cabinet's work is to coordinate state agencies and programs that deliver children's services. An annual report was submitted December 31, 2007 and is available online for review. The website dedicated to the work of the Cabinet is very useful and is currently updated. For information please visit [www.flgov.com/youth\\_cabinet](http://www.flgov.com/youth_cabinet).

Next Meetings:

Monday, July 14, 2008

Florida Gulf Coast University  
Student Union Ballrooms A and B  
Ft. Myers

**9:00 am – 4:00 pm**

Tuesday, September 23, 2008

University of West Florida  
Conference Center  
Pensacola

**9:00 am – 4:00 pm**

Tuesday, November 18, 2008

United Way of Miami Dade  
Ansin Building – Ryder Room  
Miami

**9:00 am – 4:00 pm**