



Helping Children.

Helping Families.

Serving Florida.

ANNUAL REPORT 2009-2010



**EARLY
LEARNING
COALITION**

Putnam & St. Johns Counties



Introduction

Letter from the Chair

It has been an amazing year of successes for the Early Learning Coalition (ELC) of Putnam and St. Johns Counties. In a time of economic upheaval, our forward-thinking ELC Board and staff, dedicated early learning providers, and generous community partners have teamed up to achieve astounding outcomes to the goals we set for fiscal year 2009-2010. With all of these outcome accomplishments, it is understandable that I say happily that this past year has continued to be both busy and exciting serving as Board Chair for the ELC of Putnam and St. Johns Counties.

As Board Chair, I have the privilege of leading an inspired local board and working with an incredibly committed staff. In addition to the strides we make for improving child services at the local level, we work in cooperation with state and regional entities. As local Board Chair, I also serve on the state Early Learning Advisory Council. This state-level council consists of 31 state board chairs as well as Governor appointed council leaders and Agency for Workforce (AWI) directors and staff.

Our commitment to building partnerships allows us to maximize expertise and resources within our community, eliminate duplication of services and work toward the common goal of educational success for our children. Our obligation to assure the highest quality early learning program is reflected in the goals we set. It almost goes without saying that children are our most precious resource. By investing in them, we invest in their individual futures and the future of our community as a whole.

We have had an exciting and successful year and I continue to be both thrilled and honored to be serving as Chair of this organization.

Sincerely,



Nancy R. Pearson, Chair



HISTORY

The Early Learning Coalition of Putnam merged with the St. Johns Early Learning Coalition on July 1, 2005. The merger created The Early Learning Coalition of Putnam and St. Johns Counties with the following mission and vision:

MISSION

To serve parents, caregivers and educators of children ages birth to pre-kindergarten by managing and evaluating early child care and early childhood education programs through a quality School Readiness delivery system in Putnam & St. Johns Counties.

VISION

Coordinate services that allow all children to enter kindergarten healthy and ready to learn.



The Coalition contracted with the following agencies during 2009-2010:

Episcopal Children's Services, Inc.

Episcopal Children's Services (ECS) serves as the Coalition's Primary Services Provider and offers program support services for School Readiness and Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten providers in the entire service delivery area. This agency also provides Child Care Resource and Referral services, Inclusion services and Quality Initiatives.

Putnam County School District

The school district provided School Based Education Programs, including Pre-K Early Intervention and Migrant services.

Each subcontractor submits monthly programmatic activity reports and quarterly monitoring reports are presented to the full Board.

the state average, as discussed below. In Putnam County, 858 children entering kindergarten were screened. Of those screened with the ECHOS, 86% of children were consistently demonstrating or were progressing/emerging, and 7% were not yet demonstrating. The letter naming section of the FAIR-K showed 57% above average or low risk, and 42% moderate to high risk. The results in Putnam County are somewhat lower than the state average discussed below. In order to ensure that more children will be ready for school in future years, more providers will be targeted to participate in our accreditation/ enrichment program and more providers will be offered technical assistance. Providers are also encouraged to attend early literacy trainings and initiatives that will take place over the course of the year. The state average of the ECHOS shows 87% consistently demonstrating or emerging/progressing skills, and 11% not yet demonstrating. The letter naming section of the FAIR-K showed 65% above average or low risk, and 35% moderate to high risk.

Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten

Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten (VPK) programs were implemented by the Early Learning Coalition of Putnam and St. Johns Counties in August 2005. The Florida Voluntary Pre- Kindergarten Education Standards were formally adopted by the State Board of Education in March 2005. This early learning guide describes what 4-year-old children should know and be able to do by the end of their pre-kindergarten year and is designed to guide instructors in developing and implementing appropriate early learning environments. It is of utmost importance that all VPK providers receive training on these standards. Therefore, on-going training on the Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten standards continues to be a Coalition priority. During 2009-2010, a total of 143 providers attended 9 VPK Standards Trainings Parents are also trained on the standards through workshops provided at VPK sites.

Number of Children Served in VPK:
Putnam County: 585, St Johns County: 1549

Best Practices/Quality Initiatives

Meetings – Committee and Board meeting schedules are kept current on the Coalition website (www.elcpsj.org) for easy access by the community. The Annual meeting consists of a board lunch combined with an annual board workshop. Board membership includes representatives from Faith Based and Private Child Care Centers. These representatives attend both board and committee meetings to assure childcare businesses provide feedback, input and address their concerns to the entire Board, Coalition and Primary Service Provider(s). Providers are recognized annually for their dedication to the early childhood field and for their involvement with the Coalition during Provider Appreciation Week.

Annual Kids Rally – During Kids Week, providers are encouraged to participate in the annual hanging of the hands by sending in children's hand artwork to Tallahassee serving as a symbolic reminder to the legislators of the children in Florida. ECS has encouraged providers to participate in our annual local Children's Week events and by participating with the "Hanging of the Hands" ceremony that is an integral part of making the state legislators aware of the needs of our youngest citizens. ECS conducted two community-wide events on behalf of the Coalition relating to School

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School Readiness

In 1999, the Florida Legislature established a statewide School Readiness program to target the at-risk birth to kindergarten population, to streamline the service delivery system for all publicly funded early education and child care. School Readiness programs include School Based Pre-K, Even Start, Head Start, Migrant Pre-K, and subsidized child care programs.

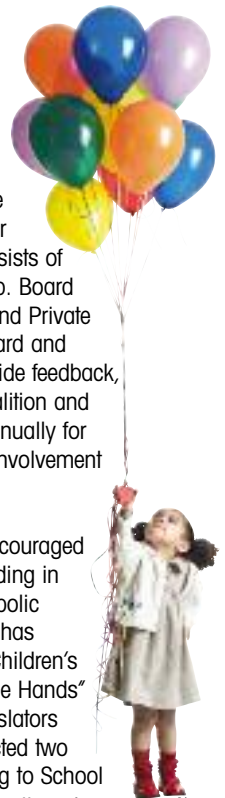
In June 2010, there were 451 children on the wait list for child care assistance in Putnam County and 718 were on the wait list for child care assistance in St. Johns County. These numbers have more than doubled since the close of the 2009-2010 fiscal year. A sign that additional funds are needed in these challenging economic times to serve more children who are priority in accordance with F.S. Chapter 411.01. As of June 2010, of all children ages birth through 12 receiving subsidized care in the Early Learning Coalition of Putnam and St. Johns Counties, over 6% were infants. This increase is due to the enrollment from the wait list late last year and in the first quarter of this year that reached the infant level of priority. There is still a shortage of providers that accept infants into care.

Number of Children Served in SR:

The Coalition served an average of 1,235 children throughout the year in Putnam County and 816 children in St. Johns County.

FLKRS Results, which are School Readiness Scores for the children who participated in the previous year's VPK programs.

Districts were screened using the ECHOS (Early Childhood Observation System) and Florida Assessments for Instruction in Reading –K (FAIR-K). In the Fall of 2009, 1,975 kindergarteners in the St. Johns County School District were screened. Of those screened with the ECHOS, 92% were consistently demonstrating or were progressing/emerging, and only 8% were not yet demonstrating. The letter naming section of the FAIR-K showed 81% of children above average or low risk, and 18% moderate to high risk. The results in St. Johns County are somewhat higher than





Programs

Readiness and child care awareness. During these events, local 4 and 5 year old child care students were invited to enjoy story time with every child's favorite red head, Ronald McDonald. Children were also given the opportunity to decorate pre-cut paper hands to be hung in the Capitol Rotunda during the entire week of Children's Week as a reminder to legislators and advocates that we must take care of our children.

Dolly Parton Imagination Library – An ongoing program to promote early learning; a child's first library. This program is one of the best ways to improve educational opportunities for children in our community. Children enroll in the Dolly Parton Imagination Library and receive one book a month until their 5th birthday. Our community children will have a library of 60 books by the time they start kindergarten. As of June 30, 2010, the Coalition had enrolled approximately 2,100 children since the onset of the program. For more information about the Dolly Parton Imagination Library, go to www.dollypartonsimaginationlibrary.com

Helping Hands – A monthly newsletter is published and distributed to providers with articles and best practice information related to the environment, accreditation, transitions, inclusion, early literacy and infant/toddler development.

Elder Options Grant – Partnering with Elder Options funding is available for a limited number of grandparents caring for grandchildren to receive assistance with their child care costs even when they do not qualify for state School Readiness funds.

Alert Now – Using the Alert Now automated dialing/e-mailing technology the ELC is now able to communicate quickly, effectively and at a low cost with child care providers participating in VPK and the School Readiness programs. This initiative is now being considered by other ELC's across the state.

Program Changes:

VPK – We utilized several venues to promote and implement the Voluntary Pre-kindergarten Program last year. Some of our promotional venues included post card mailings, flyers distributed throughout the community, display banners, yard signs at childcare providers, billboards, local movie theatre ads and print advertisements to promote the program's availability. Many VPK provider meetings were held to recruit and inform providers about program requirements. VPK potential provider packets were created and distributed to providers showing interest in the program.

Single Point of Entry/Unified Wait List

The Primary Service Provider's CCR&R specialists engage parents in their child's education, making sure that parents understand the vital role they play. Information is provided to parents on childcare licensing, and how to contact their local licensing office. They are given assistance in understanding what school readiness is and what it means regarding the education of their child. Parents using the web based Simplified Point of Entry are contacted for follow-up informational interviews. Each parent is also mailed a parent packet which is a model for the state that includes brochures describing how to choose child care, how to contact the Department of Children and Families Licensing Division, how to get help for special needs children, Kid Care insurance information, earned income credit information, and information pertaining to services available in the parents immediate



area. Much of this information is available in both Spanish and English. Contact information is also included in a cover letter in the parent packet. The contact information for CCR&R is readily accessible to providers and employers by being advertised in the online yellow pages and in the Chamber of Commerce membership directory. Brochures and posters are circulated throughout the year and are posted in healthcare offices, school-based, faith-based and private provider offices, real estate offices, libraries, and local businesses.

The Primary Service Provider currently maintains and updates all school readiness providers through CMS/EFS. The Primary School Readiness Services Provider maintains a resource and referral specialist responsible for childcare provider database maintenance upon notification by DCF. The Primary Services Provider compares its EFS data to the list of DCF's existing licensed school readiness providers on a monthly basis and compiles a report on a semi-annual basis. Parents are surveyed according to NACCRRR standards to assure that parents are satisfied with the CCR&R process. For those children receiving childcare assistance, a parent may choose any provider complying with licensing requirements, registered and/or licensed exempt, and school readiness standards or an informal provider. Once a parent has chosen a provider, the parent informs the Family Service Specialist of their choice. A certificate/voucher is then printed and signed by the Specialist, the Provider and the Parent. The voucher packet includes the signed application, voucher certificate and fee agreement. It also includes a parent letter, the document checklist, the Parent Fee Notification, Immunization Record, Proof of Parental Identity, Terms and Conditions and the income worksheet. In order for the voucher payment for childcare services to be made the following is required: a) The voucher packet with all required forms has been completed and received by the Service Provider, b) The caregiver, if an informal caregiver, has completed the Family Day Care Course within 90 days of enrollment, c) The parent has called the Service Provider to notify them of the parent's choice of childcare program, d) The attendance roster has been received by the second working day of the following month of service and has been approved by the Service Provider.





Child Care Resource and Referral Service

The Coalition's primary service provider provides Child Care Resource and Referral services and ensures that parents are offered information about a choice of settings in legally operating programs: licensed, registered, religious-exempt, school-based and informal programs, including access through certificate options, as identified in the Standard Levels of Service available in the community, regardless of the family's income. For those families who are income-eligible, health or behavioral assessment referrals, childcare tuition assistance, and childcare teacher assistance is provided. All children in publicly funded programs are screened for physical development, and for vision, hearing and speech problems as needed.



Screenings are available to children ineligible for school readiness services or on the wait list, but only by parent request. Locally, the majority of our CCR&R calls fall under parent education. The second most frequent call comes from parents looking for help, other than childcare. To aid in this second request, our contractor has compiled a comprehensive community resource guide. Our staff utilizes

United Way's online Resource Directories as well as an ECS produced resource guide that is available for both counties online and has a printed booklet. In an effort to assure our Coalition board members understand the Early Childhood community first-hand, they are asked to participate in early care and education provider site visits which are coordinated by coalition staff.

Early Learning and Child Care Providers

Early Learning & Child Care Providers	St. Johns	Putnam
School Readiness Providers	94	103
VPK Providers	44	30
School Readiness Provider Types		
Family Child Care Home	2.53%	22.29%
Informal Provider	0.03%	0.02%
Private Centers/School	96.37%	70.15%
Public School	1.07%	7.54%
VPK Provider Types		
Faith-Based	30.98%	16.65%
Family Child Care Center	.23%	0.00%
Private Center	54.56%	32.16%
Public School	14.23%	51.19%



Children Served

Type of Service	St. Johns	Putnam
Child Care Resource & Referral Calls	7044	8409
Voluntary Pre-K Children Served	1549	585
School Readiness Children Served	1279	1784
School Readiness Children Served By Care Level		
Infants	6.49%	5.18%
Toddlers	14.18%	11.64%
2-year-olds	17.31%	14.27%
3-year-olds	16.98%	15.54%
4-year-olds	14.00%	15.16%
5-year-olds	6.49%	6.65%
School age children up to 12 years old	24.13%	31.19%
Special Needs Children	.26%	.14%
Special Needs Teens	.11%	.15%
School Readiness Children Served By Funding Category		
ARRA	4.97%	11.38%
At Risk of Neglect or Abuse	19.04%	10.08%
Child Care Executive Partnership	2.01%	0.00%
Temporary Cash Assistance	13.78%	12.12%
Transitional Child Care	6.11%	1.88%
Working Poor	54.09%	59.9%

Staff Development/ Provider Training and Community Coordination

Family Child Care Home Association

Scholarships – We awarded 3 Family Home Care providers scholarships to attend their State Conference.

Community Coordination

The Coalition's Primary Service Provider, Episcopal Children's Services, held two accreditation retreats this year, and continues to hold quarterly provider meetings that are accessible to all providers.

In addition, the Coalition held its second annual Open Registration Provider Meetings, to inform providers of their responsibilities associated with School Readiness and Voluntary Prekindergarten contracts, to offer providers technical assistance by setting up individual "stations" of different program information, and to assist providers in the contract renewal process.

Community Events – The Coalition participates in at least one community event per quarter. The quarterly events include the Annual Kids Rally and Reading Events, Ancient City Kids Day and Tribute to Kids.

Books for Bravery – At the Putnam County Health Department, donated books are given to the immunization nurse to give each child receiving immunizations.

Florida Transition Project – A TRACK Team (Transitional Advisory Council for Kids) to ensure that a comprehensive, community-based, community-driven system is in place to transition pregnant women, children and their families from one service provider to another.

The major goals of the project are to address transition issues on a community-wide basis through the formalization of transition policies and procedures, to increase awareness of issues, policies, procedures, laws and regulations that impact infant and early child transitions, to provide technical assistance and support to the community, and to develop an interagency agreement for sharing of information.

Tribute To Kids – This is an annual event sponsored by Communities in Schools. This year, the Coalition sponsored a children's activity tent, where children enjoyed a safe play

environment. The Coalition also purchased a kiosk to display and promote the Dolly Parton Imagination Library. Sharing the space, was the Putnam County School District who distributed pencils, crayons, and notepads.

Annual Kid's Rally and Reading Events –

These events are the model for community collaboration. The Coalition and Episcopal Children's Services work with other local groups to promote literacy in a fun-filled, learning environment.

This year's Reading Events were the "Reading on the River" event held at the the Seminole Pavilion in Putnam County, and the "Reading with Ronald" event at Turning Point Christian Academy in St. Johns County. Several stations were available with hands on literacy activities for all children to participate. Ronald McDonald was the highlight of both events by presenting a story time show.

UWADA (United Way Agency Directors

Association) – A group of community service and United Way funded agencies sharing information and resources, and developing community goals to improve systems. Currently, the St. Johns County UWADA is working on a collaborative economic impact study to demonstrate the level of impact the not-for-profit sector has on the community.

Putnam County Shared Services Meeting –

A group of community service and United Way funded agencies sharing information and resources, and developing community goals to improve systems. Additionally, ECS updated the St. Johns Community and the Putnam County Resource Guides which are distributed to parents throughout the region.

Many other local agencies request copies as well. These resource guides help families locate other needed services such as food pantries, health services and even finding out where to register to vote.

Enrollment

Some new enrollment from the waitlist continued during the first quarter of 2009-2010. During the remainder of the year the ELC continued to see increased enrollments from children at risk of abuse and neglect. This is probably due to the poor economic climate which has caused additional strain on families.

Wait List Issues/Specialized Policy/Program at local level to reduce waiting lists

On June 30, there were 451 children on the wait list in St. Johns County and 718 in Putnam County.

Other

Placed ads in the Putnam Chamber Directory and St. Johns County Relocation Guide to notify the community and newcomers that we have quality child care resource and referral services and preparatory programs for children entering into the educational system. These publications also help to inform the community that there is an active group of citizens who are serving as liaisons to the community through their direct relationship or partnership with the Coalition and ECS to bring resources together to help increase both the professionalism and quality of child care in their community.

Program Issues

- The Coalition's monitoring staff and Primary Services staff collaborate with the local licensing agents to ensure that local providers offer quality services in a healthy and safe environment.
- Issues of providers not in compliance with the provider agreement are reviewed by the Board of Directors/Executive Director and/or given technical assistance or placed on probation.
- The Coalition is experiencing shortages of care in certain care levels (infants) and in certain locations. Provider rates paid by the Coalition have not increased in several years and this is adding to the provider shortage. Even in areas where providers are plentiful, many require parents to pay the difference in the Coalition rate and their private pay rate, making care unaffordable to School Readiness families. However, with flat funding for the past several years, we can not give the providers a rate increase without serving fewer children than our mandate requires.
- The Coalition's plan includes coaching and one-on-one technical assistance with providers to increase positive outcomes for children. We have found this approach very successful where teacher stability is maintained. However, teacher turnover due to low pay continues to be a challenge.



Financial Report



The Coalition receives funding through the Agency for Workforce Innovation's Office of Early Learning, which includes state and federal funds. Local governments and the United Way of St. Johns County also contribute match funding exclusively for slots in the working poor category and the Child Care Purchasing Pool. Below is a summary of budget and actual expenditures for fiscal year 2009-2010.

Program Administration expenses capture the costs related to administering the School Readiness program in the Coalition's service area. These included, but were not limited to, costs associated with contracted administrative services vendors, fiscal agent services, CPA audit fees, insurance, operating supplies, equipment costs, and similar items.

Non-Direct Services captures the costs related to services necessary to implement the early learning programs such as eligibility determination and monitoring. These include child care subsidy enrollment eligibility determination and re-determination.

Quality Initiatives budget captures expenses related to providing curriculum support, provider staff development coordination, community outreach, natal bags for both Putnam and St. Johns Counties, and enhancement materials for the resource lab/lending library and direct enhancements for classrooms.

Inclusion Services captures the costs related to services to include children with special needs into the traditional classroom with mainstream children.

Infant and Toddler Services captures expenses related to quality initiatives directed to children who are infants through two years of age.

Child Care Slots captures the expenses associated with providing tuition assistance for every child enrolled in the School Readiness program. These expenses were paid to providers in the form of monthly reimbursements once proper documentation was submitted to verify attendance of School Readiness children in their care.

	Budget	Actual	% of Budget
School Readiness (SR)			
Program Administration	329,200	325,431	3.99%
Non-Direct Services	322,027	322,023	3.95%
Eligibility	241,359	241,359	2.96%
Quality Initiatives	1,078,438	1,078,203	13.23%
Infant & Toddler Services	179,191	179,191	2.20%
Inclusion Services	55,783	55,783	0.68%
Resource and Referral	118,323	118,323	1.45%
SR Child Care Slots	5,875,731	5,827,759	71.52%
TOTAL SR	\$8,200,052	\$8,148,072	99.37%
Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten (VPK)			
Program Administration	118,509	118,509	2.22%
Non-Direct	113,120	113,120	2.19%
Slots	4,936,507	4,936,507	95.36%
Outreach and Awareness	11,674	11,350	0.22%
TOTAL VPK	5,179,810	5,179,486	99.99%
Total All Grants	13,379,862	13,327,558	99.61%

Administrative

- Approved revisions/updates to policies and procedures in place
- Updated the Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP)
- Adopted Sliding Fee Scales based on current federal poverty guidelines





Summary

The Early Learning Coalition of Putnam and St. Johns Counties has made great strides in improving outcomes for children. We have made many quality improvements for children, providers, and programs over the past years through quality/program enhancements, professional development training, community outreach and public relations. There is strong and cohesive collaboration among contractors, board members, and community-based organizations in our community. Many civic organizations and local businesses collaborate well with the community and school district to provide needed services, educational award programs, and additional funding to support and enhance current programs. ELC of Putnam and St. Johns Counties has made substantial gains in quality child care throughout the community with the continued use of the School Readiness provider agreement. Even if a provider only serves one School Readiness child, the quality improvements benefit all the children in the setting, not just those receiving subsidies; therefore, raising the bar of quality care in our community for all children. The Coalition receives many thank you notes and calls throughout the year from providers directly impacted by professional development training, scholarships, and quality initiatives, as well as its community partners. They are thankful for enhancement materials provided by the Coalition. Community partners are thankful for the information and collaboration received, as well as participation in local events and training.

Putnam

In 2009-2010 there were 95 Contracted School Readiness Providers in Putnam County; 47 Centers, 15 of which were Gold Seal; 45 Family Child Care Homes, 2 of which were Gold Seal. There are 7 providers in the process of enrichment.

In 2009-2010, there were 28 approved VPK providers serving 519 eligible children. 11 VPK providers were Gold Seal; 0 providers were Family Child Care Homes; and 2 were faith-based exempt.

St. Johns

In 2009-2010, there were 101 Contracted School Readiness Providers in St. Johns County; 67 Centers, 22 of which were Gold Seal; 14 Family Child Care Homes, 0 of which was Gold Seal. There are 7 providers in the process of enrichment.

In 2009-2010, there were 44 approved VPK providers serving 1332 eligible children. 14 VPK providers were Gold Seal; 2 providers were family childcare homes; and 8 were faith-based exempt.

Bright Ideas

A Professional Development Plan was approved, which included academic scholarships for providers working toward an Associate or Bachelor's degree and grants for providers seeking accreditation or re-accreditation, as well as various scholarships to conferences and workshops to increase professional development opportunities for our local providers.

Thank You to Our 2009-2010 Board of Directors

Nancy R. Pearson

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