

PROVIDER'S

SUMMER 2016

# FOCUS MAGAZINE

a quarterly publication for Hillsborough early childhood care and education professionals

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A publication of the Early Learning Coalition of Hillsborough County



## PROVIDER'S FOCUS MAGAZINE

APRIL/MAY/JUNE 2016

### EXECUTIVE EDITOR

Tracie T. White, Director of Communications & Outreach

### PUBLISHER

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### SUBMITTING AN ARTICLE

If you would like to submit an article to be included in the *Provider's Focus*, listed below are the submission deadlines for the 2015-2016 publication year.

Articles should be typed, double spaced in 11 or 12 point Arial, Calibri or Times Roman font. Any accompanying photos or artwork should be in high resolution JPEG format (at least 300 dpi) and sent as a separate attachment along with the article (*not inserted in the article*). Photo releases should accompany any photo submissions. Submit all to [twhite@elchc.org](mailto:twhite@elchc.org) by noted deadlines. Please note that submission does not guarantee publication.

Submission Deadline	For Issue	Will hit mailboxes:
October 14, 2015	Winter 2015 (Oct/Nov/Dec)	Mid November 2015
January 13, 2016	Spring 2016 (Jan/Feb/Mar)	Mid February 2016
April 13, 2016	Summer 2016 (Apr/May/Jun)	Mid May 2016
July 13, 2016	Fall 2016 (Jul/Aug/Sept)	Mid August 2016

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# It's Been a Pleasure Serving You



## **A MESSAGE FROM THE CEO**

If you haven't already heard, I am retiring. I've been with the Coalition since it began and now, 15 years later, I think it's time for me to turn the reins over to new leadership. It has been my pleasure and privilege to have worked with you. Over the years I have had many roles within the field of early childhood. My time and experiences as an early childhood provider strongly influenced the actions I've taken and decisions I've made during my tenure as Coalition CEO.

I know first hand the daily challenges and responsibilities faced by our provider community. You have not chosen an easy career but you have absolutely chosen one of the most rewarding. The value that you bring to our community is immeasurable and long lasting. We at the Coalition have and will continue to work toward elevating the importance and value of what our providers contribute to the lives of our children, families, and community.

I leave you in very good hands. Coalition staff will continue their dedication to supporting our early childhood professionals and setting high expectations for those who deliver services to children and families in Hillsborough County. It is this partnership that is most valuable in helping us achieve our goals.

Once again, I thank you for your friendship, support and commitment to our children and community. In the words of famous clown, actor, comedian, artist, author, and composer Red Skelton...

Good night and may God bless!

Dave McGerald

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# PROVIDER PORTAL



BY TRACIE T. WHITE  
*Dir. of Communications & Outreach*

The future is now and the ELCHC is moving forward by introducing new and efficient ways of doing business with the early childhood professionals of Hillsborough County. It started in late 2015 with the introduction of the new Learning Management System (LMS) that allows providers to plan, participate in, track and manage every aspect of their professional development. Now the ELCHC is introducing its new Provider Portal! A web-based, secure and streamlined venue for providers to complete contractual agreements and maintain volumes of necessary documentation.

In early April the Early Learning Coalition of Hillsborough County (ELCHC) launched its **Provider Portal**. The Portal is a new and more efficient way for early learning programs to conduct their business with the Coalition. It is web-based, secure, easy to use and was launched just in time for programs to electronically complete and submit their 2016-2017 School Readiness and/or Voluntary Prekindergarten Statewide Agreement(s).

To get started in using the Portal, all programs need is a working computer with an up-to-date web browser (i.e. *Google Chrome, Firefox, Safari, etc.*) and an ability to scan and upload, in a PDF (Postscript Document Format) format, all of the documentation that is required as part of the contracting process. The Portal includes a secure email feature, secure document storage and a

streamlined method of submitting, reviewing and approving the many records and documents that contracted early learning programs must submit and retain.

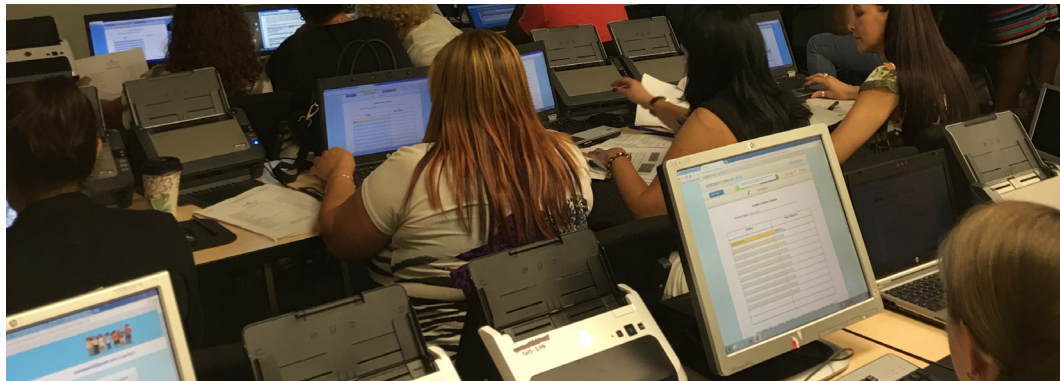
Programs were notified about the Portal via numerous direct mailings, email blasts and face-to-face interactions with Coalition provider support staff. These notifications included instructions on how to access, sign up for, and start to use the Portal. However, realizing that many programs may not be comfortable with the new technology, Coalition staff established two types of face-to-face technical assistance sessions, *Portal Overview & Workgroup* and *Coffee & Contracts Sessions*, to help programs learn, understand and use the Portal.

The *Portal Overview and Workgroup* sessions were large group sessions for those who needed just a little

help in navigating the Portal. The *Coffee & Contracts* sessions were small group sessions for those who required more detailed and intensive assistance in using and understanding the Portal. Scheduled sessions were every Saturday thru May 19, 2016. Based on need, additional training sessions may be scheduled. Providers should monitor their email and the main Portal page for new information about training sessions.

To further assist programs, the Coalition implemented short video tutorials on its YouTube channel and also crafted a detailed *Portal User Manual* that can be downloaded from the Portal or from the Coalition's website under the Resources tab.

At this writing, over 300 programs are successfully working in the new Portal to complete their 2016-17 Agreements.



**RESOURCE & CONTACT INFO**

**Providers that need assistance logging in to the Provider Portal (<https://providerportal.elchc.org>), contact:**

Kristina Pagliuco	kpagliariuco@elchc.org	813-515-0805
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**For questions regarding School Readiness agreements, contact:**

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Daisy Homan	dhoman@elchc.org	813-906-5053 (Spanish)

**For questions regarding VPK agreements, contact:**

Sally McGinnis	smcginnis@elchc.org	813-515-0949
Cathy Konkler	ckonkler@elchc.org	813-515-0951
Jean Flick	jflick@elchc.org	813-515-0950

**Programs are reminded that all agreements for FY2016-2017 must be completed by Friday, May 27, 2016!**

Museums, zoos, parks, and other cultural venues offer tremendous learning opportunities for children — but how do we help parents use these opportunities as springboards for language and literacy growth at home?

# A POWERFUL APPROACH TO FAMILY ENGAGEMENT



At Layla's House, a Champions for Children family education center in Tampa's Sulphur Springs neighborhood, we have been working to answer this question. In the summer of 2015, 33 families completed an experimental 8-week summer program called *Explorers Club*. Families met at Layla's House twice a week, for two hours each day. Parents and children participated in a variety of activities related to Tampa's cultural venues, including Lowry Park Zoo, the Florida Aquarium, the Glazer Children's Museum, and the Museum of Science and Industry (MOSI). Families also received free admission to visit these venues on their own. Based on feedback from parents and on our continuing research into key strategies for building children's language and literacy skills, we have learned much about helping parents to have POWERFUL conversations with their children before, during, and after their visits. We believe these conversations are a critically important way that parents can make learning fun and help their children become smart, successful, motivated, and curious learners.

What are POWERFUL conversations? A POWERFUL conversation helps children notice details, explains hidden reasons for why things are the way they are, builds on children's personal interests and natural curiosity, and links to other experiences that parents and children have together. These conversations can happen during a memorable activity, but they are also important conversations to have before and after a memorable activity, when parents talk with a child about the past, or about the future. Research shows that these types of conversations, which extend learning over time, are strongly associated with children's language growth in the preschool years (*Demir, Rowe, Heller, Goldin-Meadow, & Levine, 2015; Levya, Sparks, & Reese, 2012; Rowe, 2012*). The letters in the word POWERFUL can provide tips and reminders for parents about these



conversations:

## P

**Predict** – Before visiting a new place with your child, talk with your child about what you might see. Ask questions like, “What animals do you think will be there?”

Talk about the **Past** – After visits, find ways to have your child talk about your adventures. Encourage your child to tell other family members or neighbors about what you saw and did together.

**Prompt your child** – When your child is telling someone about the visits, add encouraging prompts, like “Tell Daddy about when we fed the birds!”

**Pictures or videos** – Use your Phone to take Pictures or Videos. Look through the pictures and videos later to talk with your child and remember the fun that you had together. Encourage your child to use the pictures in telling others about the trips you took.

## O

Be **Observant** during the visits, so you can prompt your child with details that your child will enjoy telling others about later. Take note of colors, sounds, and smells that you can encourage your child to talk about during the trip and after the trip. Also, if you know that another family member who is not on the trip is very interested in something, look for things that your child can tell that family member about. For example, if Grandma is very interested in butterflies, point out any butterflies that you see on your trip, and remind your child to tell Grandma about them later.

**Observe** your child carefully to notice what really fascinates him or her during the visits. Notice what really holds your child’s attention and captures your child’s personal interest.

Over time, grow your child’s interests by finding books, videos, and internet sites that your child will enjoy, about the things that fascinated him or her



during the visits. Studies show that when children develop rich areas of knowledge (called “Islands of Expertise”) about a topic, such as dinosaurs, they can talk and think in those areas at a higher level than they can outside of those areas (Crowley & Jacobs, 2002).

## W

**Wonder** together about the things that you see during your visits. Ask “Why” questions. “I wonder why that toucan bird’s beak is shaped like that?” “I wonder why the Native Americans made their houses like that?” Encourage your child to find people who work at the venues, ask them these questions and learn about the answers. You can also encourage imaginative questions, such as “I wonder what it would be like to live in an igloo?”

## E

**Explain** things that might not be obvious to your child about how the world works. Use “because” statements. For example, “See how that bug is the same color as the tree bark? That’s because it makes it harder for birds to see him. It helps to protect him from being eaten by birds.” “See how that bird is on the back of that cow? That’s because there are ticks on the cow, and the bird likes to eat the ticks.”

## R

“**Remember** when...” is a great prompt to use when talking with your child about past visits or encouraging your child to tell others about the visit to others. “Remember when that little dog ran up to us in the parking lot? Tell Grandpa about that!”



## F & U

Talk about the **Future** – Say things like, “Tomorrow when we go to the park, we will pack a lunch. What do you think we should bring? What do you think we will see and do at the park?” If possible, look at, talk about, and play with pictures, toys, or other objects related your visit before you go. Reading books about your visit before you go is another great strategy.

**Follow** your child’s lead at the visits. Let your child choose which areas to visit first, and which exhibits to spend the most time with.

Look for things that Fascinate your child. Afterwards, ask your child, “What was your Favorite?”

**L**  
‘Powerful’ continued on page 12



# The 2016 Legislative Session Ended with Major Children's Legislation Approved

*By Mary Harper, Ph.D., Director of Learning Initiatives, Tampa Bay  
Institute for Early Childhood Professionals (IECP)*

The 2016 60-day legislative session ended with the passing of an \$82.3 billion state budget with a near unanimous vote. Many major strides were made in early education. They include bills regarding childcare, Early Steps for children with developmental delays, and Florida First budgeting priorities.

A significant achievement of the session was the passage of revisions to legislation that lifts the 5-year ban on KidCare health insurance for lawfully residing immigrant children. The legislation was seven years in the making. An additionally important initiative was the passage of legislation for the federal reauthorization for the Child Care Development Block Grant (CCDBG). Even more exciting was the increase in Florida First's budgeting priorities that positively affect children and families. In this article, we will outline these legislative updates so you understand what to expect in the upcoming fiscal year for the state of Florida (July 1, 2016 – June 30, 2017).

## 2016-17 Florida First Budget

On March 17 Governor Rick Scott signed the 2016-2017 Florida First budget into law along with a veto list of \$256.1 million. The budget includes some increases in programs and services for early learning, child welfare, persons with disabilities, and the juvenile justice system.

Here are the Budget Highlights for Early Learning:

The total funding in the Florida First budget is more than \$1 billion – an increase of \$26.1 million over last year's funding. The money that was allocated to early learning initiatives was distributed in the following way:

- \$395.2 million was allocated for the Voluntary PreKindergarten Program
- \$10 million increase to School Readiness (with proviso that allows for contracted slots targeting children in concentrated areas of poverty)
- \$10 million for TEACH scholarships which can be used to increase the number of CDA credentialed early care and education professionals in Florida
- \$15.5 million for the early learning Performance Funding Program for child care instructors who improve the quality of the education they provide (a \$5 million increase).
- Nearly \$650,000 increase for Help Me Grow over current year funding (a total of \$2.45 million)
- \$3 million for Early Learning Florida to increase the accessibility and capacity of professional development opportunities.

Here are the Budget Highlights for Healthy Families:

The money that was distributed to supporting systems for Healthy Families initiatives was done in the following way:

- \$27 million in the statewide Healthy Start Program, an increase of \$400,000 over last year's funding, to improve the health and wellbeing of pregnant women and children in Florida
- \$10.2 million, an increase of \$2.8 million, to implement evidence-based practices for treating parent's mental health and substance abuse disorders that put children at risk.
- \$28.8 million in Federal Trust Funds for Florida KidCare Coverage for Lawfully Residing children
- \$7.3 million for Children's Specialty Hospitals
- \$2 million for Healthy Families expansion
- \$18.3 million for federally qualified health centers
- \$10 million for Free and Charitable Clinics
- \$5 million for Safety Net Program for the Children's Medical Services Network

## 2016-17 Legislative Initiatives:

While the legislature allocated a great deal of money, it also passed some significant pieces of legislation that affect the implementation and expansion of early learning in the state of Florida. These pieces of legislation are highlighted below.

### EARLY LEARNING AND SCHOOL READINESS

#### *Early Learning – Child Care Development Block Grant*

HB 7053, a child care reauthorization bill that brings Florida into compliance with the federal regulations that need to be enacted in 2016 for the School Readiness program, passed the full House. The bill has been signed into law by the Governor. The bill provides for the drawdown of federal block grant funding for subsidized child care, and directs the Office of Early Learning to develop quality standards for publicly-funded child care, including appropriate group size requirements.

#### *Voluntary Prekindergarten Eligibility*

Language that revises the eligibility for the Voluntary Prekindergarten Education Program to include 5 year olds was amended in CS/CS/HB 7029 . A one-time participation in the VPK program is still the rule, however parents would now be able to determine whether to enroll children at 4 or 5 years of age. The proposed change does set age limits by providing a cutoff date for eligibility for children turning 6 years of age before Feb 1, 2017. This would limit the qualified population of children that would be younger than 5 years of age that may not be developmentally ready for kindergarten.

#### *Voluntary Prekindergarten Accountability*

CS/CS/HB 7029 on School Choice includes language that will suspend kindergarten readiness rates from being assigned for last year and this coming fall. In doing so, the bill also requires that low performing providers that were deemed such before the change in kindergarten readiness assessment remain as low performing providers until the scores for 2017 are calculated.

#### *Reading Instruction*

The rate of 3rd grade students performing below grade level in reading has consistently exceeded 40 percent over the past several years. Thus, SB 1068 and CS/CS/HB 7029 through the legislative process were amended to require the use of data from the statewide kindergarten readiness screening to identify students in need of reading interventions and supports. Additionally, it authorized the use of alternative pre- and post-assessments aligned to the performance standards adopted by the Office of Early Learning for the Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK). This is why the state VPK provider community saw the removal of the requirement to use TS Gold as the pre- and post- assessment tool of choice by the Office Early Learning.

### HEALTH AND WELLNESS

#### *Florida KidCare Program*

HB 89 allows children of lawfully residing immigrants, who

See "Legislature," continued on page 12

Make as many **Links** as possible when talking with your child about what you see. Say things like, "That's just like the bear we read about in your book!" Or, "That's just like when the dinosaur we saw at the museum by Aunt Gina's house!" Make links when watching movies or reading books, saying "That's just like what we saw at the museum!" or "That's just like the instrument you really liked at the orchestra!"

And finally, use the **Library** as one of the most important ways to get the most educational value out of your learning adventures. When your child is fascinated by something, like sharks at the aquarium, say, "Those sharks are so cool! We really need to go to the library to get some books about sharks!" Ask librarians to help you find wonderful stories and non-fiction books about the things that fascinate your child. As long as your child remains interested in a topic, continue getting related books, ideally over long periods of time. As you read together, you'll help your child develop powerful words, powerful ideas, and a powerful curiosity about the world that will lay the foundation for a lifetime of learning success.

Consider using these tips for parents as part of your center's family engagement program. Encourage families to visit

cultural venues. Support families in using the visits to build their children's language skills. Provide ways for children to talk about their adventures in class, using these same tips for POWERFUL conversations. Encourage teachers at your center to find out what fascinates the children in their classes, and then use that fascination to move children's language and learning forward.

*Fascinate.*

*Educate.*

*Lead the children through the gate to lifelong learning when you choose to partner with museums and zoos, aquariums, and so much more.*

*For children learn when they explore and talk about what they have seen, discovering what new words mean, and finding books that tell them more about the things they now adore.*

*For lifelong learning starts in us when we are young and curious.*

**References:**

Crowley, K. & Jacobs, M. (2002). *Islands of expertise and the development of family scientific literacy*. In G. Leinhardt, K. Crowley, & K. Knutson (Eds.) *Learning conversations in museums* (p. 333-356). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Demir, O. E., Rowe, M., Heller, G., Goldin-Meadow, S., & Levine, S. C. (2015). *Vocabulary, syntax, and narrative development in typically developing children and children with early unilateral brain injury: Early parental talk about the there-and-then matters*. *Developmental Psychology*, 51(2), 161-175.

Levy, D., Sparks, A., & Reese, E. (2012). *The link between preschoolers' phonological awareness and mothers' book-reading and reminiscing practices in low-income families*. *Journal of Literacy Research*, 44(4), 426-447.

Rowe, M. L. (2012). *A longitudinal investigation of the role of quantity and quality of child-directed speech in vocabulary development*. *Child Development*, 83(5), 1762-1774.

have been living in the United States less than five years to be insured under the Florida KidCare program. This bill extends the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) and Medicaid eligibility to a "lawfully residing child" who meets other eligibility qualifications of the program.

**Early Steps Program**

SB 7034 was amended to align with HB 7053, the Child Care Development Block Grant bill. The bill passed the full House and was signed by the Governor on April 14, 2016. The bill renames the "Infants and Toddlers Early Intervention Program" as the "Early Steps Program," sets accountability standards, and revises requirements for the Department of Health (DOH) to maintain a clearinghouse of information for parents and health care providers on developmental evaluation and early intervention programs. The bill also requires the development of an individual family support plan for each child served in the program, and expands eligibility to serve additional children.

**What to Expect for 2016-2017**

With the changes to things like the Child Development Block

Grant, Performance Funding Program, and contracted slots, Hillsborough will see some changes in how School Readiness contracts are determined. Moreover, the VPK Eligibility and VPK Accountability Measures will bring changes to how our classrooms currently assess and provide programs to children four to five years of age. It should be noted that all of the legislative initiatives reflected marked movement toward providing quality early learning and intervention opportunities for all young children.

As these legislative initiatives move forward and are implemented by the Office of Early Learning, the ELCHC will be your partner as we work together to improve the quality and accessibility of early care, education, and intervention throughout our community. The Coalition will provide regular and timely communications to discuss changes, updates, and shifts in procedures to assure that you, our valued partners, know how to proceed to effectively shape and positively impact the lives of the young children and families that you serve.

# The Background Screening Clearinghouse

## A Tamable Animal!

By Angela Chowning, Manager of Hillsborough County Child Care Licensing

During the 2012 Florida legislative session, changes were made pertaining to caregiver background screening for those regulated by various agencies. House Bill 943 created a "Caregiver Background Screening Clearinghouse." The benefit, amongst others, is the ability through this screening pool for multiple agencies including, the Department of Children and Families, to access the screening results of staff members that provide care to children, the elderly, and disabled individuals.

As with anything new, there have been many kinks to work out. However, the end result is very worthwhile for the child care providers, and if used properly, is a fantastic tool in ensuring that our most vulnerable population is protected.

The first step for providers is to access the Clearinghouse and register. This should be done whether or not they or any of their staff are due for a five year rescreening.

The second step, after registering, is to create and maintain a roster of employees by entering hire dates of staff members. An employer must also re-enter the Clearinghouse and delete staff members when they leave their employment. According to section 435.12 (2) (c), changes in status must be made within 10 days. In addition, the Clearinghouse runs the criminal record of all staff registered every 24 hours. Please note that if the creation of the roster is not completed, an owner/operator will NOT be alerted if the employee's criminal status changes.

Other benefits include:

- The ability to track screenings from the time they are initiated to the time a determination is made.
- The ability to search for Live Scan Service Providers and gives links to their websites for appointment making purposes.
- The allowance for email notification when results are available.
- Providing an Individual Profile page that includes results and a photograph of the employee for security purposes.



The Department of Children and Families screening website ([www.backgroundscreening.com](http://www.backgroundscreening.com)) has useful information on the Clearinghouse and how to navigate the system in written form and through video presentation.

For any further questions on the Clearinghouse or to set up an individual appointment for assistance from our screening unit, please contact (813) 264-3925.

### HELPFUL LINKS

**DCF Background Screening**  
<http://www.dcf.state.fl.us/programs/backgroundscreening/>

**Hillsborough Child Care Licensing Program**  
<http://www.hillsboroughcounty.org/childcarelicensing>

# UNDERSTANDING TO SUPPORT CHILDREN

By Shabel Santiago, M.S.-Inclusion Support Services, The E

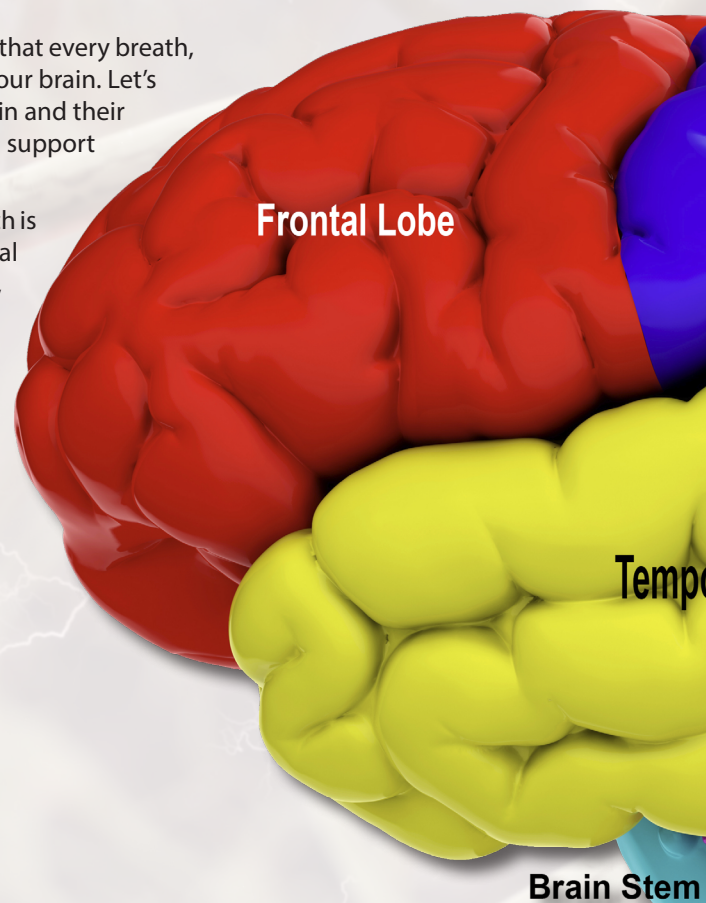
When was the last time that you thought about the human brain? Consider that every breath, movement, and thought you've had in the last second is all controlled by your brain. Let's take a moment to familiarize ourselves with the fascinating parts of the brain and their amazing functions so we can have a better understanding of how we can support the development of young children.

Starting at the base of the brain, we have the **brain stem** (*light blue area*) which is made up of the pons, medulla oblongata, and the midbrain. This area is crucial to survival and regulating vital functions such as breathing, swallowing, and body temperature. The brain stem also works as a bridge connecting signals from the brain to the spinal cord to disseminate messages throughout the rest of our bodies. Next, we have the cerebellum. The **cerebellum** (*pink area*) is at the base of the brain behind the brain stem. It is responsible for posture, balance, and coordination of movement and the proprioceptive system. Moving upward we get to the **cerebral cortex** also known as the "thinking brain." This area of the brain is made up of four lobes: the **temporal lobe**, **occipital lobe**, **parietal lobe**, and the **frontal lobe**.

The **temporal lobe** (*yellow area*) is responsible for hearing and language. This is the part of the brain that is processing sound, such as when someone is speaking to you and you hear and understand the sounds being heard are words. The **occipital lobe** (*green area*) is responsible for visual processing. This section of the brain distinguishes the input from your eye through the retina to differentiate colors and other visual stimuli. For example, in looking around outside and seeing a tree, this part of the brain lets you know, "that is a green tree."

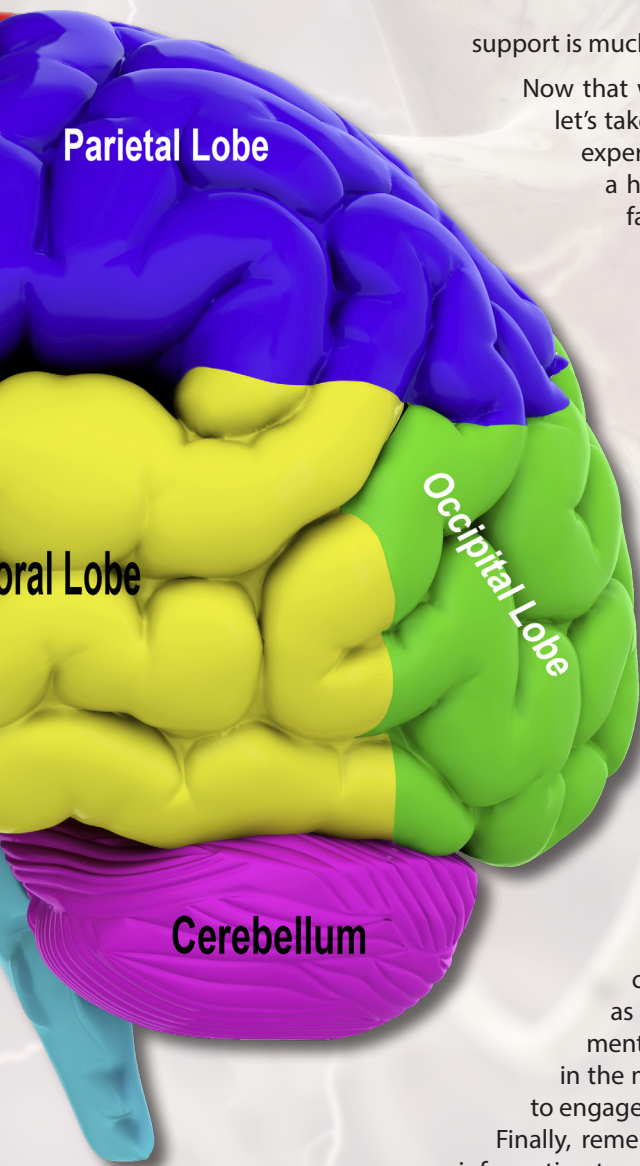
The **parietal lobe** (*purple area*) has two major responsibilities. One is related to sensory perception where taste, temperature, and touch stimuli are processed and the other is visual motor planning. For instance, when you are eating a piece of chocolate cake, this part of the brain tells you the cake is soft and sweet while at the same time coordinating your hand to get the fork into your mouth.

Finally, at the very front of the brain is the **frontal lobe** (*red area*). The frontal lobe is the biggest part of the brain and the last part of the brain to develop. The frontal lobe is responsible for cognitive and executive function. Executive function consists of problem solving, emotional regulation/impulse control, memory, judgment, planning, and creativity. Given that this part of the brain is not fully mature until the early 20's of an adult's life, patience and



# NG THE BRAIN D DEVELOPMENT

Early Childhood Council of Hillsborough County



support is much needed in developing this part of the brain in young children and teens!

Now that we have covered the basics of brain anatomy and the functions for each area let's take a look at what happens to the brain when it is exposed to long term negative experiences. Everyone at some point or another is exposed to stress in their life, from a hectic day at work, long commute, moving into a new home, to a death in the family, etc. At first exposure to stress, our body's heart rate may increase along with hormones released, but then the body recovers. These are a few examples of short term stress exposures that do not have long term affects on our physiological well being.

However, what happens when stress isn't short term but is ongoing and constant. Children that are exposed to toxic stress such as poverty, domestic violence, abuse, drug exposure, lack of a nurturing caregiver, are at risk for having structural changes to their brain as a result of these chronic, negative experiences. Based on the research of Dr. Jack Shonkoff and colleagues from the Center of the Developing Child, Harvard University, we know that "toxic stress weakens the architecture of the developing brain, which can lead to lifelong problems in learning, behavior, and physical and mental health." These negative and long term experiences have the ability to rewire the brain from the typical developing trajectory.

So what can we as caregivers do to support healthy brain development? The good news is that there is a lot we can do! Providing a stable early care environment with nurturing and consistent caregivers is a start. From infant to preschooler, knowing you have a caregiver that you can trust to meet your needs establishes a foundation of security to build upon for other engaging activities. Engagement in language rich activities from floor time, to mealtime, to small group will assist in the development of the temporal lobe. A language rich environment involves caregivers talking with children using a wide range of vocabulary and participating in back and forth communication exchanges. This also goes hand in hand with literacy activities such as book exposure, reading/story time, and print rich environments. As previously mentioned, it takes quite a number of years for the frontal lobe to fully develop but in the meantime modeling problem solving, talking about emotions, allowing children to engage in child directed play, will help light up brain activity and support development. Finally, remember that the brain is a multisensory learning tool, so when presenting new information to young children remember to use multisensory activities that include touch, taste, seeing, smelling, hearing, and movement.

Reference: <http://developingchild.harvard.edu/>

# A FOCUS ON CONTRACT COMPLIANCE

As part of the new Statewide School Readiness Provider Agreement, Coalition staff recently began monitoring providers who were selected for Tier Two Monitoring. Tier Two sites were randomly selected and notified at the beginning of the contract year. Tier Two monitoring involves an on-site visit and utilizes a statewide monitoring tool. One important aspect of this monitoring is the review of sign in and sign out sheets. During this monitoring, some issues with sign in and sign out sheets have been noted. This article will address some of the common issues that have been observed with the sign in and out sheets and offer suggestions for overcoming these issues.

Sign in sheets are required for all children receiving School Readiness funding as a way for parents to show that their children were in attendance. They must accurately reflect the days and times the children were present. Providers must ensure that sign in sheets include the following information

- The name of the facility/ provider
- The complete name of the child
- The month and year of the record
- The time in and time out (must be accurate), including AM or PM
- Full signatures of the person signing the child in and out (in ink)- initials are not allowed

The provider should prepare sign in sheets at the beginning of the month and have a system for maintaining these sign in sheets that assist parents in easily completing the sign in and sign out process. Some providers maintain all of their School Readiness sign in and out sheets in one binder at the entrance of the program. Other providers have sign in sheet binders located in individual classrooms.



# SCHOOL READINESS: SIGN IN AND SIGN OUT SHEET REQUIREMENTS

The sign in sheets should be stored in a way that allows parents to easily know where their child's sign in sheet is located. Wherever the sign in sheets are stored, children must be signed in and out every day that they are in attendance and this should happen at the time of drop off and pick up.

Providers can also help facilitate the completion of the sign in and out process by making sure there are pens located near the sign in and out book. Additionally, it is helpful to have a clock nearby so that parents or guardians can accurately record the time of arrival and departure. The person signing the child in should record the time; the provider should not allow the parent to leave this blank and then enter the time later for the parent.

It is the provider's responsibility to ensure that parents or guardians sign their children in and out every day that the children are present. If a child is absent, the provider can write "out" or "absent" on the blank line before the child returns to care. This will allow parents to easily sign on the correct line the next time they sign the child in. If a parent misses signing a child in or out, the provider must get the parent to correct this as soon as possible, preferably the next time the child is at the program.

The sign in and sign out sheet should be completed by the person who is authorized to drop off and pick up the child. In other words, if a child's aunt drops the child off, the aunt should sign the child in. The person signing children in and out must sign their own name. Under no circumstances should a person sign the name of another.

No providers, employees or volunteers of the provider may sign a child in or out unless it is impossible for the parent or guardian to physically sign the child in or out. One example of this would be a child being transported by the provider. In this case, the parent must give written consent for the provider to sign the child in and out and this document must be retained by the provider as part of the School Readiness documentation for five years.

If a mistake is made on the sign in sheet such as a parent signing on the wrong line or entering the time incorrectly, the error should be crossed out and the correction made above it. The person who makes the correction can put their initials by the change. White out should never be used on sign in sheets.

The bottom of the sign in sheet is to be signed by the parent

or approved guardian and the provider at the end of the month. The purpose of this signature is for the parent and provider to confirm that all the information for the month is correct. Monitors have observed many cases where providers are asking parents to sign the bottom of the sign in sheet at the beginning of the month and put a future date on the signature line. This is not allowed. The bottom of the sign in sheet should not be signed, by either the parent or the provider, until the month is over. Technically, if parents are signing the bottom of a blank sheet, they are confirming that their child was NOT present for the month.

The ELCHC is unable to authorize reimbursement or may require a reimbursement adjustment for the following:

- No sign in and sign out sheets in use
- Missing sign in sheets
- Discrepancies between attendance rosters and sign in/sign out sheets
- Parents signing children in or out in advance
- Providers signing children out

See "**Compliance**," continued on page 23



# Governor Scott Signs Early Learning Bill that Changes VPK Eligibility

At the close of the 2016 Florida Legislative Session, Florida Governor Rick Scott signed five bills related to education into law. One of those bills, House Bill 7029 was a whopping 160 pages long but contained a piece of legislation of particular importance to Coalitions. House Bill 7029 extended the eligibility for the Voluntary Prekindergarten Program (VPK).

Florida parents whose children are born from February 2 through September 1 in a calendar year will soon have a new option when it comes to enrolling their 4-year-old in the state's free, voluntary prekindergarten program (VPK). They can enroll their child that year or wait until the following year when their child is 5 thanks to the education bill signed by Governor Scott.

The extension is intended to allow parents of younger 4-year-olds to postpone the year their child begins VPK, in turn enabling the child to begin kindergarten and start first grade as a slightly older, more mature student. Children in Florida are not required to attend either the state's VPK program or kindergarten programs, but are required to attend school the year that they turn 6 by February 1.

Office of Early Learning Executive Director Rodney MacKinnon said, "A few months can mean a big difference in a child's readiness to learn. Giving parents the option to defer VPK for their young 4-year-old for a year lets them choose what they believe will best prepare their child for future school success."

House bill 7029 takes effect **July 1, 2016**. Four-year-old children with birthdays from February 2 through September 1 will be eligible to enroll in VPK that year or postpone it to the next. Four-year-olds with birthdays from September 2 through Feb 1 are eligible to enroll in VPK the following program year.

Providers that have questions about this may contact ELCHC Provider Services staff at (813) 515-2340.



# Quality Counts for Kids

**NEW DATES ADDED!!**



# Workgroups

Quality Counts for Kids Workgroups are designed as small group meetings to guide child care providers through the Quality Counts for Kids process. These meetings offer family child care providers and center director's with an open forum to receive the individualized, targeted support they need as they work on the self-study. Workgroups are designed for both centers and family child care providers to attend. We recommend that you bring your self-study, any documents you would like reviewed, and/or questions about QCFK grants.

This is not a training, but rather an opportunity to get answers to any QCFK questions you may have. It is not mandatory, and there is no cost to attend.

To sign-up for a workgroup, simply go to the LMS at <https://elhc.talentlms.com/index>  
 Search keyword:  
**QCFK Workgroups**

DATE	TIME	LOCATION
Wed., May 18	12:00 pm - 2:00 pm	The Institute (IECP)
Thurs., May 26	6:00 pm - 8:00 pm	Hills. County Public Library
Tues., June 14	1:00 pm - 3:00 pm	The Institute (IECP)
Sat., June 18	9:00 am - 1:00 pm	The Institute (IECP)
Wed., July 20	6:30 pm - 8:30 pm	ELCHC - Dale Mabry
Tues., Aug. 16	6:30 pm - 8:30 pm	The Institute (IECP)
Thurs., Sept. 15	6:00 pm - 8:00 pm	The Institute (IECP)
Tues., Oct. 11	6:00 pm - 8:00 pm	The Institute (IECP)
Wed., Oct. 19	10:00 am - 12:00 pm	ELCHC - Dale Mabry
Tues., Nov. 8	6:00 pm - 8:00 pm	The Institute (IECP)
Thurs., Nov. 17	1:00 pm - 3:00 pm	The Institute (IECP)
Tues., Dec. 6	10:00 am - 12:00 pm	The Institute (IECP)
Thurs., Dec. 8	6:00 pm - 8:00 pm	ELCHC - Dale Mabry

*The Quality Counts for Kids program is funded by:*





***“To me, the ability to control my classroom and what happens in it is the ultimate form of respect. I know that my students and parents respect me when I have control of my environment.”***

**— Pre-K Classroom Teacher**

The above quote is from a teacher who believed that to be an effective and efficient teacher she had to control every aspect of her classroom.

In observing her classroom I noted that the children seemed to be moving from one activity to another, never fully engaging and the teacher spent much of her time policing the classroom.

What does it mean when children are engaged? This means the children are involved, curious and all about the goings on of the classroom. The classroom runs smoothly with everyone busy and there being very little wait time. Children become bored without challenges and that boredom can take many forms; one of the most obvious is behavior problems.

Children do not always have the ability to effectively communicate their feelings with words, so they do it with actions. This is why it is extremely important that teachers understand where the children in their classrooms are developmentally. They should know which children require more stimulation and those which require less and plan accordingly.

Children who are naturally motivated will look for ways to self correct. By this, it means children are capable of self directed thinking. This is, thinking about your thinking, to make your thinking better. (*Livingston, J. A. (1997). Metacognition: An Overview.*) They are the ones who are always asking questions and perhaps driving their teachers bonkers in the process.

These are the children who keep teachers on their toes, and yes at times, create the most behavior problems. These are also the children who are developmentally ready to regulate their own behavior. It is the teacher's job to give them the tools necessary to master this most important skill. Children who become easily frustrated are not able to regulate their own emotions and deescalate their behavior.

Tips that encourage self regulation include:



# To Control or Not Control? Should that Really be the Question?

By *Bobbie Huard*  
Quality Counts for Kids Program Specialist

- Teachers can model self regulation by using a low tone and a matter of fact form of speech when correcting children, in other words — STAY CALM!
- Teachers need to be alert to a rise in impulsive activity in the classroom and redirect promptly.
- Provide a calm and predictable environment. (Livingston, J. A. (1997). *Metacognition: An overview.*)

Now that we have touched on children's behavior let's explore the teacher's behavior. Focusing on the teacher in the original example, her control over her environment was actually impeding the children's ability to grow and flourish as individuals. Scaffolding children's learning requires skillful removal of adult assistance. According to Salonen, Vauras, and Efklides (2005, 2), teachers must pay careful attention to "the learner's moment-by-moment changing independent functioning."

The children could not make choices about what activities they wanted to become involved in or even how to effectively use the materials provided to them. Children were not guided in their interactions with their environment or with one another. The expectations of the children were never established. To

shift from teacher-control to child-control requires the teacher to be able to be "present in the moment" — also known as a teachable moment, and to be able to define expectations.

Expectations are any defined behavior and roles that are deemed appropriate for the classroom. (Livingston, J. A. (1997). *Metacognition: An Overview.*) How are expectations agreed upon? There are many ways that this can occur. First, they can be classroom mandated. Teachers can accomplish this by encouraging the children to help in setting classroom rules. Research has shown that when anyone has a vested interest in establishing rules for their environment they are more likely to adhere to what is expected. (McLeod, S. A. (2008) *Social Roles*). Another way, which is not nearly as effective, is teacher made rules. Teachers have a tendency, as anyone would, to adapt the environment to fit their needs and not necessarily the needs of the students. So, when creating rules, they do so in a manner that is self fulfilling and not conducive to enabling children to self regulate.

Students, who are encouraged to make choices, learn how to regulate their own behavior, which also decreases behavior problems in the classroom. They feel safe to use trial and error to define what works for them and what does not. Some

See "**Control**" continued on page 23

# The ELCHC About Town Gallery

The ELCHC Board of Directors and staff are always out and about gathering support and attention for the work that we do for providers and the children and families of Hillsborough County. Here are a few the places ELCHC has been lately.

Below, ELCHC Board Chair Aakash Patel appears on WFLA Channel 8 to discuss ELCHC's ReadyRosie initiative.

Dr. Mary Harper at the Glazer Children's Museum's Education is Key Breakfast



At top & at left, the new ELCHC family services area — Dale Mabry location. We're still decorating, but the space is open and functional for parents and children.

research that surfaced years ago, showcased an article written by Anne Edelstam. Her article focused on children who lived most of their lives in a cult. The article showed that once these children left the cult, they were unable to make simple choices for themselves. Even something as simple as deciding what they wanted to eat was above their comprehension and it sent them into crisis mode. Children who are at risk due to financial, community, or family situations have more of a challenge learning to make appropriate choices. These children’s lives are beyond their own control and so they look to others to make choices for them.

So, as educators and caregivers, what can we do to help children in developing their ability to make good choices while still creating healthy limits and boundaries?

- **Tell children what they can do rather than what they can’t.**

For example, if a child is unable to play in blocks because of inappropriate behavior, allow them to choose from two different areas instead of saying “You can’t play in blocks because you throw blocks.” (also always label what the behavior is instead of saying you don’t play well in blocks.)

- **Say “Yes instead of “No.”**

Try and turn every no answer into a yes. This takes practice but its well worth the effort. An example would be instead of telling Kevin not to put ketchup in his fruit, allow him to do this. He may learn something from the experiment, such as fruit and ketchup doesn’t really taste that good. Each teacher needs to decide for themselves where their tolerance level lies. What are you willing to allow and not allow, to happen in your classroom?

- **Establish boundaries.**

Children need boundaries. They belong to a society that relies on rules and regulations to keep us safe, and classroom rules are designed for the same reason.

Encouraging the development of choice-making is an important tool for children; and one that can be a challenge for teachers. Teachers find it difficult to do as they see it as “giving up their power to children,” but instead of looking at in this way teachers should view it as empowering children. Children who are empowered grow up to be healthy, productive citizens who will make a positive impact on their world. It teaches children to trust their own instincts and, they do not have to be controlled to make a good choice. So, what do you think, to control or not control; should that ever be a question?

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- Providers has a number of children in care that exceeds their licensed capacity
- Failure to allow ELCHC staff access to the facility while in operation
- Failure to allow ELCHC staff access to the sign in/sign out sheets when requested

Sign in and sign out sheets must be retained for a minimum of five years. With the launch of the new provider portal, providers who submit their attendance online will be able to upload their sign in and sign out sheets to the document library. This will make the storage of these records much easier.

The Coalition wants to assist providers in maintaining compliance with these sign in and sign out requirements. If you have any questions regarding your sign in and sign out procedures or any other contract requirements, please feel free to contact Lorinda Gamson, Provider Compliance Manager at [lgamson@elchc.org](mailto:lgamson@elchc.org) or by phone at (813) 999-0133.





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**FOCUS** MAGAZINE

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You hold their hands, you see them grow.  
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You keep them safe while they explore.  
You are the one that they adore.  
You know they need the time to play.  
You keep them busy and learning every day.  
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