



Children's
FORUM
...because kids can't wait

“Education is not preparation
for life; education is **life itself.**”

-John Dewey



Message from the PRESIDENT

As I reflect on the Forum's accomplishments over the past year, I can't help but think of the real superheroes for young children. Early childhood educators hold the keys to high-quality early learning experiences. They help to prepare children for readiness in school, but they are often underpaid and undervalued. The Forum will continue to advocate for the early learning workforce until they have compensation parity with their K-12 counterparts with comparable education and experience.

Our most notable achievements this past year include the following:

- \$10 million in funding for the **T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® Scholarship Program**. This funding provided approximately 7,000 scholarships for early childhood educators to earn credentials and degrees in the early care and education field.
- The expansion of **Early Childhood Educator INCENTIVES\$ Florida** (formerly known as Child Care WAGES®) to Pinellas and Hillsborough counties. With this expansion, approximately 2,500 early childhood educators were able to access financial incentives based on their level of education and continued employment. INCENTIVES\$ is also offered in Broward and Miami-Dade counties.
- \$2.23 million in funding for current **Help Me Grow® Florida** affiliates to promote developmental screenings, care coordination, and outreach to address health and behavioral concerns among children. This funding provided services to approximately 6,471 children and 5,731 families.

I am humbled by those who made our success possible. To our Board of Directors, thank you for providing oversight and guidance on behalf of the Forum's mission. To our funders, thank you for believing in the work we do to promote positive outcomes for young children. To our employees, thank you for remaining steadfast in our initiatives and for your dedication to serving early childhood educators. Finally, thank you to Florida's legislators who recognize the importance of early care and education, both in budget and policy priorities.

We look forward to a new year and new beginnings, including a move to a new building for our Tallahassee-based employees. This facility, which is close to the Capitol and Florida's Office of Early Learning, will make it easier to connect with policy makers and other key stakeholders. In addition, the landscape for the 2020 legislative session is promising for the early learning community. I applaud members of the Florida Senate and House Education Committees, Commissioner Richard Corcoran, and Governor Ron DeSantis for their commitment to improving early care and education. The early years (birth to five) are the most important years in laying the foundation for later success in school and in life. As John Dewey said, "Education is not preparation for life; education is life itself."

Phyllis Kalifeh, Ed.D.
President & CEO



Message from the BOARD CHAIR

Hope springs eternal, and we have reasons to be hopeful about the future of early care and education. The critical work of the Children's Forum will continue to meet the needs of organizations that serve our youngest children.

To address compensation for the educators who directly serve young children, the Forum continues to expand Early Childhood Educator INCENTIVES\$ Florida (formerly known as Child Care WAGES®) to more counties. Due to the Forum's efforts, Florida is one of the lead states in the nationwide "Moving the Needle on Compensation" project which addresses multiple strategies to address this critical need.

The Forum continues to administer the T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® Scholarship Program to help improve quality in child care programs. In addition, Florida was one of two states chosen to address Higher Education Barriers through grant funding from the T.E.A.C.H. National Center.

To assist families with accessing support, the Forum continues to expand Help Me Grow® Florida, which served 6,471 children this past year. Through its 12 affiliates, the program connects families to free resources that address their child's health, development, behavior, and learning. The program helps to ensure that children don't fall through the cracks.

We continue to provide leadership through the Florida Chamber's Business Alliance for Pre-K and its business leaders who realize that we cannot overlook those early years. In addition, we never miss a chance to advocate alongside our many partners for improved quality in our state's systems. Florida's rank of 41st in state spending per child will not keep it competitive with neighboring states, which outspend Florida by a wide margin.

But hope springs eternal. With a new Governor, a new Chair of the Children and Youth Cabinet (the Governor's wife), a new Commissioner of Education and a new Director of the Office of Early Learning, we are hearing that the state leadership is taking a new look at the potential of a better early learning system. We will continue to push for bold action in the early childhood space. We know that if the state ignores those crucial first five years, and especially the first three years, then despite all the best intentions, we will not help our children achieve their true potential. The Children's Forum will keep working and fighting for every one of those children.

Bob Buesing, J.D.
Board Chair

PROGRAMS OF THE CHILDREN'S FORUM 2018-2019



Child Care Evaluation Services

Now in its 12th contract year, the Child Care Evaluation Services unit provides the following accreditation management and educational support services for the Florida Department of Children and Families (DCF) Office of Child Care Regulation:

- ★ Evaluating applications from prospective Florida Child Care Professional Credential (FCCPC) training institutions to determine their eligibility to offer the FCCPC, and monitoring the status of all FCCPC training programs in the state
- ★ Evaluating applications from prospective and renewing accrediting associations to determine their eligibility for designation as Gold Seal Quality Care Accrediting Associations
- ★ Assisting owners/operators of early care and education (ECE) programs in Florida with questions about becoming a Gold Seal program, assisting current Gold Seal programs with inquiries about their status, and maintaining the state database of early care and education programs that have attained Gold Seal status
- ★ Designing and producing public awareness documents for dissemination

Accomplishments

- ★ An average of 1,869 early childhood/family home programs maintained a Gold Seal designation
- ★ Two publications for DCF were produced

Impact

- ★ Early childhood educators who participated in high-quality training programs were better equipped to prepare children for school than providers with no training or education
- ★ Child care programs that achieved a Gold Seal designation met the quality standards of an approved accrediting association and may provide higher-quality services to children and families than programs without the Gold Seal designation



Early Learning Career Center

Operated by the Children's Forum and funded by The Children's Trust (TCT), the Early Learning Career Center (ELCC) offers professional development services to all early learning programs and educators in Miami-Dade County. The ELCC, which is part of the Miami-Dade Early Learning Quality Improvement System (QIS), provides career advising and TCT educator scholarships in support of a diverse workforce. The ELCC also connects early childhood educators in Miami-Dade to other professional development supports such as Early Childhood Educator INCENTIVES\$ Florida funded by TCT (formerly known as Child Care WAGES® FLORIDA) and the T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® Scholarship Program.

Accomplishments

- ★ 68 percent of QIS educators accepted TCT scholarships and/or INCENTIVES\$ financial supports over the last year
- ★ 94 percent of educators participating in the QIS for over two years hold a Florida Staff Credential
- ★ 78 percent of educators who did not hold a Florida Staff Credential upon entry into the QIS have since obtained one

Impact

- ★ QIS educators have higher quality interactions with the children in their classrooms when they hold degrees, accept more scholarships, and receive INCENTIVES\$ financial supports

- ★ QIS degree holders make an average of \$1.93 more an hour than those who do not hold a degree
- ★ Developing English proficiency skills can make a positive difference in how much QIS degree holders earn:
 - Proficient English speaking degree holders make an average of \$2.27 more an hour relative to their proficient English speaking non-degree holding peers, whereas non-English proficient degree holders make \$0.56 cents more an hour than their non-English proficient peers who do not hold degrees
 - Many QIS educators (40%) are bilingual with most of those reporting fluency in Spanish and English



Help Me Grow® Florida

Help Me Grow® Florida (HMGF) promotes the healthy development for all children by providing access to free developmental and behavioral screenings and connecting families to the resources they need to succeed. By building cross-sector collaboration among community agencies, child healthcare professionals, and early childhood educators, HMGF addresses the critical importance of early detection and intervention. HMGF provides a centralized access point that supports families by giving them parenting and developmental information, referral services, and available community resources. HMGF care coordinators continue to follow-up with the family until their needs have been met.

Accomplishments

- ★ 6,471 children and 5,731 families were served by HMGF
- ★ 6,830 developmental and behavioral screenings were completed using the ASQ-3, ASQ SE-2, PSC, or M-CHAT R/F tools. Of these screenings, 50 percent resulted in at least one concern or need for monitoring
- ★ 53 Books, Balls, and Blocks community screening events were held across Florida last year, which resulted in 850 screenings and 459 referrals
- ★ 5,538 referrals were made to community services and programs, and 77 percent of children were successfully connected to at least one of those services

- ★ 6,123 healthcare providers received information on HMGF and the importance of developmental screening and surveillance
- ★ More than 375 health care provider and community agency partnerships were maintained and established

Impact

- ★ HMGF continues to save the taxpayers money and helps leverage the greatest value from state spending. HMGF saved the state of Florida more than \$7 million
- ★ Through cross-sector collaboration, HMGF is able to facilitate communication and streamline services for families
- ★ HMGF screens children that may need early detection/intervention services prior to starting school



T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® Scholarship Program

The T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® Scholarship Program (T.E.A.C.H.) is helping to establish a well-qualified, fairly-compensated, and stable workforce for Florida's children. Funded by the Florida Office of Early Learning and operated by the Children's Forum, T.E.A.C.H. provides scholarships for early childhood educators to work towards an Associate, Bachelor's, or Master's Degree in early childhood education, a Child Development Associate (CDA) Credential, a Florida Staff Credential, a Director Credential, or credential renewals.

T.E.A.C.H. maintains a three-way partnership in which the early childhood educator, the sponsoring program (the scholar's employer), and T.E.A.C.H. share the costs for classes, books, and time away from work. Scholars earn a raise or bonus after the successful completion of an educational year and agree to work for at least one year at their sponsoring program.

Accomplishments

- ★ T.E.A.C.H. scholars attended 66 approved training programs, colleges and universities
- ★ 24,458 credit hours were taken by T.E.A.C.H. scholars
- ★ 2,442 licensed early child care programs had at least one employee who participated in T.E.A.C.H.

Impact

- ★ 99% of sponsors and scholars would recommend T.E.A.C.H. to other early educators
- ★ The average GPA for T.E.A.C.H. scholars was 3.32, helping to create an educated early learning workforce that knows how to nurture the growing minds of children
- ★ The turnover rate for T.E.A.C.H. scholars was 3.5 percent, significantly lower than the national turnover rate of 30-40 percent
- ★ T.E.A.C.H. scholars earned an average increase of 11.37 percent in wages, which supports the economic viability of the early childhood workforce



Professional Development Registries

The Children's Forum maintains two professional development Registries, the Miami-Dade Professional Development Registry and the Palm Beach County Training Registry. These registries provide a central database to record the workforce qualifications of early childhood educators such as employment history, compensation, benefits, credentials earned, and college courses/training activities completed. Funding for the Miami-Dade Professional Development Registry and Palm Beach County Training Registry is provided by The Children's Trust and the Children's Services Council of Palm Beach County.

Accomplishments

- ★ Approximately 2,500 early childhood educators in Palm Beach county and 4,500 early childhood educators in Miami-Dade county were active participants in the registry

Impact

- ★ Workforce trends from the registries can be used to make policy-informed decisions to improve early care and education (ECE) programs



Assessment and Coaching Services

The Children's Forum holds a contract with the Florida Office of Early Learning for providing Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) observation and coaching services within each county in Florida. As one of a select few OEL contracted vendors for providing these services, the Forum offers early learning coalitions and other agencies with CLASS support services on an as-needed basis to assist them in meeting state-mandated program assessment requirements.

Accomplishments

- ★ 15 early learning coalitions and the Redlands Christian Migrant Association (RCMA) received CLASS assessments during the spring and summer of 2019
- ★ Assessments were conducted in every region and in 20 counties across the state between March and June 2019
- ★ 50 certified CLASS assessors throughout Florida conducted CLASS assessments on behalf of the Children's Forum

Impact

- ★ 1,048 CLASS assessments were conducted between March and June 2019
- ★ 406 early learning programs throughout Florida received assessments
- ★ CLASS observations and coaching help to improve the quality of teacher-child interactions which are important to young children's learning and development



Early Childhood Educator INCENTIVE\$ Florida

Early Childhood Educator INCENTIVE\$ Florida, an affiliate of Child Care WAGES®, rewards early childhood educators with financial incentives based on their education and continuity of employment. By retaining the early childhood workforce, INCENTIVE\$ provides children with more stable relationships and better-educated teachers. INCENTIVE\$ addresses individual professional development efforts and low wages, but does not affect budgets, regular wages, or parent fees within the child care program.

INCENTIVE\$ is licensed by Child Care Services Association of Chapel Hill, NC and administered by the Children's Forum under a contract with local early learning coalitions, children's services councils, and private contributors. Through these partnerships, INCENTIVE\$ is enhancing the professional development of early childhood educators to improve the quality of child care programs.

Accomplishments

- ★ 2,500 early childhood educators received at least one financial incentive
- ★ 832 childcare programs participated in INCENTIVE\$, serving more than 59,000 children throughout the state
- ★ The average six-month financial incentive was \$643, which is equivalent to at least \$0.62 cents more per hour

Impact

- ★ The turnover rate for INCENTIVE\$ participants was 4 percent, compared to the national average turnover rate of 30-40 percent
- ★ 95 percent of participants stated the program is an incentive for them to seek additional education
- ★ 94 percent of participants reported INCENTIVE\$ helped to ease financial stress
- ★ 98 percent of INCENTIVE\$ participants were satisfied with the program

Early Childhood Educators INCENTIVE\$ Florida Now Available in Pinellas and Hillsborough Counties

The Children's Forum is excited to announce that Early Childhood Educator INCENTIVE\$ Florida (INCENTIVE\$) is now available in Hillsborough and Pinellas counties. INCENTIVE\$, an affiliate of Child Care WAGE\$®, provides education-based financial incentives to early childhood educators working with children ages birth to five. Operated by the Children's Forum and funded by the Early Learning Coalitions of Pinellas and Hillsborough Counties, INCENTIVE\$ is designed to increase the quality of child care programs. INCENTIVE\$ rewards early childhood educators and allows them to earn \$200-\$3,000 more per year, based on their level of education and retention with their employer. The program is also available in Miami-Dade and Broward counties. To learn more about INCENTIVE\$, please visit incentives-fl.org.

Office of Early Learning Partners with Children's Forum on Programs and Services to Benefit Early Childhood Programs

In partnership with Florida's Office of Early Learning, the Forum is facilitating the following programs and services that are helping to improve early care and education programs:

- **Transition to Kindergarten Regional Summits:** The Children's Forum has conducted 10 Transition to Kindergarten Regional Summits across Florida. Additional summits are planned in the coming months. These summits provide a collaborative opportunity for early learning coalitions, school districts, child care programs, educators, and other community partners to support children's successful transition to kindergarten. Participants learn about transition best practices, share local transition resources and efforts, and develop a plan for enhancing the transition system in their area.
- **Coordinated Child Assessment Plan:** The Forum is in the process of developing a 5-year plan to implement a coordinated child assessment system in Florida. The plan will align with recommendations from the Committee for Early Grade Success. It will include feedback from stakeholders on available childhood assessment data, barriers to utilizing child assessments, an analysis of School Readiness and VPK providers who use child assessments systems, and considerations for changes to assessment policies and procedures.
- **Task Force and Core Competencies Project:** The Forum is facilitating a Professional Development Task Force focused on improving the professional development system for early childhood educators. The Professional Development Task Force is revising the current Florida Core Competencies for Early Childhood Education Professionals and the Early Childhood Education Professional Development Career Pathway.



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* Five-Nine Years of Service
** Ten-Fourteen Years of Service
*** Fifteen Years of Service or More



Children's Forum Board of Directors

Forum board members are volunteers who contribute their time and expertise to provide oversight and guidance on behalf of the Forum's mission. We are fortunate and proud of their commitment and dedication to our work and grateful for their generous service.

Phyllis Kalifeh, Ed.D.
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Funders & Clients

- Association of Maternal and Child Health Programs
- Children's Services Council of Palm Beach County
- Citrus Health Network, Inc.
- ELC of Broward County
- ELC of Escambia County
- ELC of Florida's Heartland
- ELC of Hillsborough County
- ELC of Indian River, Martin and Okeechobee Counties (IRMO)
- ELC of Lake County
- ELC of Marion County
- ELC of Miami-Dade and Monroe Counties
- ELC of Northwest Florida
- ELC of Osceola County
- ELC of Pasco-Hernando Counties
- ELC of Pinellas County
- ELC of Polk County
- ELC of Sarasota County
- ELC of Seminole County
- ELC of Southwest Florida
- ELC of St. Lucie County
- ELC of the Nature Coast
- Florida Afterschool Network
- Florida Association for the Education of Young Children (FLAEYC)
- Florida Association of Healthy Start Coalitions
- Florida Department of Children and Families
- Florida Family Child Care Home Association
- Florida Head Start Association
- Florida's Office of Early Learning
- Mailman Center for Child Development
- Redlands Christian Migrant Association (RCMA)
- The Children's Trust of Miami-Dade County
- US Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families - Office of Refugee Resettlement
- Volunteer Florida



Financial Report

2018-2019	Revenue	Expenditures
T.E.A.C.H. (Office of Early Learning & Private)	\$10,156,143	\$10,207,794
Help Me Grow	\$2,197,870	\$2,197,358
Professional Development/Quality Initiatives	\$1,121,620	\$1,141,511
Early Childhood Educator INCENTIVE\$ Florida	\$1,282,630	\$1,290,541
Program Assessment Center	\$477,614	\$420,086
Child Care Evaluation Services	\$185,915	\$185,915
Other	\$200,941	\$174,857
TOTAL	\$15,622,733	\$15,618,062



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Sponsored by the Children's Services Council of Palm Beach County

Sponsored by the Early Learning Coalition of Broward County, Inc.

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