

SPOTLIGHT

2026

ON PROVIDERS

A SPACE TO GROW



EARLY EDUCATION
HOT TOPICS

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TABLE

03

A NOTE FROM EXECUTIVE
DIRECTOR & BOARD CHAIR

05

PROVIDER
REPRESENTATIVE LETTER

06

GROWING LEADERS IN
EARLY EDUCATION

10

TURNING QUESTIONS INTO
MEANINGFUL INTERACTIONS



13

BEYOND THE CREDENTIAL:
WHY PROFESSIONAL
PREPARATION MATTERS

17

OH MY! MUSIC, WHY?

22

VOICES OF GROWTH:
EARLY EDUCATORS REFLECT

31

LAYING THE FOUNDATION: WHY
EARLY EDUCATION MATTERS

43

WRITE FOR US



OF CONTENTS

A NOTE FROM BIMAL & STEVE



Throughout 2025, we have seen the incredible impact that dedicated educators and providers bring to our community. The Early Learning Coalition of Pasco and Hernando Counties is proud to work alongside professionals who show up each day with commitment, compassion, and purpose. On behalf of our staff and Board of Directors, thank you for the partnership that helps strengthen early learning for children and families across our two counties.

This year, more children than ever entered Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) classrooms, and School Readiness (SR) enrollment continued to grow as more families gained access to early learning programs. These milestones are possible because of professionals like you who create environments where children feel safe, supported, and inspired to learn.

We remain focused on supporting you with the resources, training, and partnerships needed to grow as professionals and strengthen the quality of early learning across our community. Through programs like Loving Start, LENA, Transition to Kindergarten, START, and the Promise Institute we continue working together to support children and families.

The work you do each day creates moments of discovery, encouragement, and growth. Those moments build the confidence and curiosity that help children step into the future ready to learn and succeed. We are grateful for the passion and dedication you bring to this important work. Because of you, children, families, and communities are stronger.

Bimal Bhajani and Steve



RIBBON CUTTING



On January 28th, ELCPH marked 20 years of impact—with a Community Ribbon Cutting Celebration! We were thrilled to officially celebrate our new office location in Hudson, hosted by the Greater Pasco Chamber of Commerce. It was a joy to connect with the local community and ELCPH Board Members and partners as we marked this exciting milestone together.

To our dedicated childcare providers—thank you for your daily commitment to advancing our mission of high-quality early childhood education for our youngest citizens. Your work makes celebrations like this possible!



YOUR PROVIDER REPRESENTATIVE

My journey in early childhood education began as an afternoon school-age teacher at my family's Hands-On Learning Center in Hudson. After exploring a different path for a few years, I returned to early learning in 2019, driven by a deep desire to make a meaningful impact on young lives. Continuing my family's legacy—which began in the early 2000s—I am honored to lead Learn and Play Preschool, a place where curiosity, play, and growth are woven into every day.

The trust families place in our teachers and facility is my greatest reward. Small comments mean the most—like when a busy parent tells me they drive against their morning commute because they chose our school. Moments like that remind me of the profound importance of early childhood work: there is truly no other profession where you are greeted each morning with the warmth and joy we receive from children.

I remain committed to providing safe, reliable childcare and enriching early learning experiences for as many families as possible. That commitment starts with our loving, dedicated teachers, directors, and support staff, who bring patience, creativity, and care to every classroom. It is a privilege to serve this community and support each child's first steps toward a lifetime of learning.

As a provider representative on the Early Learning Coalition of Pasco and Hernando Board of Directors, I also remain available to offer support, share insights, and contribute to conversations that strengthen early learning for children, families, and providers across our community.

Haris Horozovic

HARIS HOROZOVIC
PASCO COUNTY PROVIDER REPRESENTATIVE

Growing Leaders in Early Education

Eunice Lopez, M.Ed.
Early Childhood Education
Adjunct Faculty -
Pasco Hernando State College

For the past three years, I have had the honor and privilege of teaching the Director Credential course at Pasco-Hernando State College in partnership with the Pasco-Hernando Early Learning Coalition. This collaboration has allowed me to work closely with early educators from across Pasco and Hernando counties, and the experience has been nothing short of extraordinary.

Each cohort brings together individuals who are not only eager to learn but genuinely invested in elevating the quality of early childhood education in their communities. Teaching a hybrid course may seem challenging to some. However, incorporating live Zoom sessions has proven to be an invaluable asset to the learning experience. These virtual meetings create meaningful opportunities to see students face-to-face, engage in real-time discussion, and build a stronger sense of connection despite the physical distance.



Being able to interact visually allows me to gauge understanding more accurately, respond to questions immediately, and clarify concepts in ways that deepen comprehension. Students also benefit from the collaborative atmosphere, sharing insights, reflecting together, and applying course content with greater confidence.

Rather than limiting the learning experience, the hybrid format enriches it. The combination of independent work and live virtual engagement supports a more dynamic, flexible, and personalized approach to teaching and learning. Their enthusiasm is palpable—from the thoughtful questions they ask to the way they immediately begin applying new strategies in their classrooms and programs. They arrive



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There is something uniquely special about the professionals in our region. Their dedication runs deep.

ready to learn, and they leave even more committed to the children and families they serve.

Although I have the opportunity to teach and coach early educators in various counties, there is something uniquely special about the professionals in our region. Their dedication runs deep. They approach this work with humility, respect, and a profound sense of responsibility. They understand that teaching our youngest learners is both a privilege and a calling, and they carry that truth with them in every assignment, discussion, and reflection.

Witnessing their growth—both personally and professionally—has been one of the most rewarding aspects of my career. Their passion fuels my own, and their commitment reminds me daily why this work matters. I am grateful for the opportunity to walk alongside them as they strengthen their leadership, expand their knowledge, and continue shaping the future of early childhood education in Pasco and Hernando counties.

Thank you for allowing me to share my early learning knowledge with you. It's been an absolute pleasure to support the professional growth of our early educators.

PROVIDER *Recognitions*

**NICE
WORK!**



Kids R Kids Meadowpointe Q1 2025

Recognized for their attention and efforts in maintaining compliance within the Provider Portal along with consistent and excellent monitoring of their programs.

East Pasco Academy Q2 2025

Outstanding participation and dedication to professional development through coaching. Remarkable engagement by using our coaching platform, TORSH, to upload evidence of their coaching efforts and set meaningful classroom goals.

St Thomas Aquinas Early Childhood Center Q3 2025

Nominated for submitting their monthly reimbursement on time, free of errors and for having minimal findings in their attendance monitoring.

Kids' Stuff Preschool & Childcare Q4 2025

Recognized for their incredible resilience after a major hurricane that forced them to close for several months. Through determination and teamwork, they rebuilt and reopened, restoring a safe, nurturing environment for the families they serve.



We wish we could name every one of our incredible providers—so many were recognized for their amazing achievements this past year!

PURE

gold

**CELEBRATING OUR NEW
GOLD SEAL
ACCREDITED PROGRAMS!**

★ **SUGAR PLUM
ACADEMY**

★ **O2B KIDS NEW
PORT RICHEY**

★ **O2B KIDS ODESSA**

★ **O2B KIDS LUTZ**

★ **O2B KIDS WESLEY
CHAPEL**



**Accreditation is Now More
Accessible Than Ever!**

ELCPH supports the professional growth of providers through the Gold Seal Accreditation process. This opportunity is fully covered, including all membership and application fees.

**Ready to start your accreditation
journey? To learn more, please
contact Melissa Hayes at
m.hayes@elcph.org**

TURNING QUESTIONS *Into Meaningful Interactions*

By Kelsi Perez
Assistant Director
Pitter Patter Kids Preschool

Children are naturally curious. From the moment they begin to speak, they ask questions about everything around them. These questions are not distractions. They are opportunities to explore, connect, and learn together.

As educators and caregivers, we can turn these everyday moments into meaningful investigations. When we respond with interest and intention, we help children build confidence, think critically, and stay engaged.



Curiosity is the foundation of learning. When children ask questions, they are practicing language, exploring ideas, and expressing their thoughts. Every “Why is the sky blue?” or “What happens if I mix these?” is a chance to:

- Support deeper thinking and problem-solving
- Encourage communication and collaboration
- Build emotional and cognitive skills
- Show children that their ideas matter

Here are a few simple ways to turn spontaneous questions into learning experiences:

- **Pause and reflect together**

Instead of giving a quick answer, ask “What do you think?” This encourages children to share their ideas and think more deeply.

- **Write it down**

Create a “Wonder Wall” or keep a class journal of questions. Revisit them during circle time or small group activities.

- **Explore through play**

If a child asks “Why do leaves change color?” gather leaves, read a book, watch a short video, and create leaf art. Let the question guide the activity.

- **Use everyday tools**

Magnifying glasses, clipboards, and measuring tapes can turn simple observations into exciting discoveries.

- **Connect with the community**

If a child wonders how mail gets delivered, write letters together or invite a postal worker to visit. Real-world connections make learning more meaningful.

Adults do not need to have all the answers. Our role is to model curiosity, guide exploration, and create safe spaces for children to ask, try, and learn. When we say, “Let’s find out together,” we become partners in learning.

Children’s questions are not interruptions. They are the heart of learning. By embracing their curiosity and turning it into investigation, we help children become confident thinkers and lifelong learners. Let’s keep asking, wondering, and exploring together!



Our role is to model curiosity, guide exploration, and create safe spaces for children to ask, try, and learn.





EARLY CHILDHOOD CREDENTIALS

Early Childhood Apprenticeship

- Must be employed in an Early Learning Center
- Participate in apprenticeship at Marchman Technical College
- \$200 Textbooks and Materials included

Childcare Director Credential

- Up-Skill credential opportunity
- Must have CDA or equivalent to qualify
- \$365 Tuition and Textbook included

Family Child Care Home - NCDA

- Family Child Care Homes eligible for an online, National CDA program
- \$850 Tuition, Textbook, and Materials included

T.E.A.C.H Wrap Scholarship

- Provide financial assistance and academic guidance through the T.E.A.C.H. Scholarship to help early childhood educators earn higher education degrees.

*All credential applicants must be Pasco or Hernando County early educator to qualify. Must be at least 17 years of age and have a high school diploma or GED. Other prerequisites may be required.
All programs are based on funding availability.

Contact ELCPH Education Engagement Coordinator:
Samantha Dominguez at s.dominguez@elcph.org or 727-233-8291 ext. 125

BEYOND THE CREDENTIAL: WHY PROFESSIONAL PREPARATION MATTERS

Samantha Dominguez
Education Engagement Coordinator
Early Learning Coalition of Pasco and Hernando



Earning a Florida Staff Credential or a National Child Development Associate (CDA) is far more than checking a box or meeting a licensing requirement. It is a meaningful investment in professional growth, teaching quality, and, most importantly, children’s lifelong learning. For early childhood educators and program directors, these credentials represent a commitment to intentional teaching, evidence-based practices, and the creation of nurturing environments where young children learn best. While obtaining a credential demonstrates professional readiness, the true

value lies in the depth of knowledge, reflection, and skill-building that educators gain throughout the process.

One of the greatest benefits of earning a credential is the shift toward intentionality in teaching. Early childhood education is not simply supervising children or providing activities to fill the day. Intentional teaching means making thoughtful decisions, planning with purpose, and understanding the “why” behind every



interaction, routine, and learning experience. Through credential coursework and competencies, educators deepen their understanding of child development, learning trajectories, and developmentally appropriate practice. This knowledge empowers teachers to design environments and experiences that support each child's growth socially, emotionally, physically, and cognitively.

When educators understand how children develop, they are better equipped to implement strategies that genuinely foster learning. Credential programs emphasize observation, assessment, and responsive planning, helping teachers become more attuned to what children need in the moment. This leads to richer, more meaningful learning opportunities. Children thrive when educators intentionally create hands-on, play-based experiences that spark curiosity, build independence, and strengthen problem-solving skills. Whether it is setting up an inviting block area that encourages collaboration or guiding a science exploration outdoors, credentialed educators know how to transform everyday moments into purposeful learning.

The Florida Staff Credential and the CDA also highlight the importance of creating safe, supportive, and engaging classroom environments. A credentialed educator understands how to build strong relationships with children, support emotional well-being, promote positive behavior, and establish routines that help children feel secure. When children feel safe and valued, they are more open to exploring, trying new things, and expressing themselves—key components of healthy development. These high-quality environments don't happen by accident; they are built by educators who have learned and practiced the foundational skills taught through professional credentials.

For program directors, having credentialed staff elevates the quality of the entire program. It ensures that classrooms are led by educators who understand developmentally appropriate practice, communicate effectively with families, and can implement curriculum in meaningful ways. A highly skilled staff not only supports strong child outcomes but also strengthens the program's reputation, compliance, and long-term success.

Ultimately, earning a Florida Staff Credential or a National CDA is not about obtaining a certificate to hang on the wall. It is about becoming the educator



children deserve. It is about gaining the knowledge and confidence to guide children through the most critical years of development. As early childhood educators, the work we do shapes the foundation of a child's future. The skills gained through credentialing empower educators to create joyful, hands-on learning experiences that ignite curiosity, build essential life skills, and support every child's unique path of growth. Children flourish when teachers continually grow, and credentialing is a powerful step toward that growth.

PROVIDER VISIT HIGHLIGHTS

With

Executive Director, Steve Knobl, Ph.D.



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3



4

1. SOLID STEP LEARNING CENTER
2. A BRIGHTER FUTURE PRESCHOOL
3. ALL ABOUT ME
4. LA PETITE ACADEMY 7402

*Thank
=YOU=*

Thank you to all the providers for welcoming the ELCPH Board members and me – we truly appreciate the opportunity to visit with our dedicated childcare providers!

OH MY! *Music, why?*



Brenda J. King
Director
Eden Christian School



**Music is a
wonderful outlet
for emotional
expression.**

Music can be found everywhere—from lullabies sung to infants to playful chants and rhymes shared by frolicking young children. When I was a teacher, I struggled with incorporating music into my daily lesson plans. I wondered how I could teach using music and why it was so important. After more than thirty years of teaching early childhood education, I learned that music truly helps students learn, manage behavior, and enhances early learning in many ways.

Cognitive Development

Research indicates that exposure to and participation in musical activities can enhance



Studies have shown that children who engage in music education often display improved spatial-temporal skills.

memory, attention, and mathematical abilities in young learners. Songs with repetitive lyrics and melodies help children memorize information, such as the alphabet or counting sequences. When children participate in musical activities, they must recognize patterns in rhythm, melody, and structure. This fosters early mathematical and logical reasoning. Studies have shown that children who engage in music education often display improved spatial-temporal skills, which are crucial for problem-solving.

SONGS FOR LEARNING PATTERNS

- *THE WHEELS ON THE BUS*
- *OLD MACDONALD HAD A FARM*
- *FIVE GREEN AND SPECKLED FROGS*

SONGS THAT PROMOTE MEMORY SKILLS

- *HEAD, SHOULDERS, KNEES AND TOES*
- *IF YOU'RE HAPPY AND YOU KNOW IT*
- *TEDDY BEAR*

Language and Literacy Development

Singing songs, reciting rhymes, and clapping to rhythms all support the development of phonological awareness. This is a foundational building block for later reading and writing proficiency. Through exposure to diverse songs and musical genres, children gain new vocabulary and learn expressive forms of communication, such as tone, pitch, and emotion in speech.

SONGS THAT PROMOTE LITERACY DEVELOPMENT AND PHONOLOGICAL AWARENESS

- *APPLES AND BANANAS BY RAFFI*
- *HIP HOP ALPHA BOP BY JACK HARTMANN*
- *B-I-N-G-O*
- *WHO LET THE LETTERS OUT BY DR. JEAN FELDMAN*

Social and Emotional Growth

Music is a wonderful outlet for emotional expression, whether through singing, dancing, or playing instruments. Children learn to express emotions such as happiness, sadness, excitement, or calm. Group music activities help students recognize and respond to the feelings of others.

These activities also require cooperation, turn-taking, and listening, which help build a sense of community and teamwork in the classroom.

SONGS FOR SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL GROWTH

- *IF YOU'RE ANGRY AND YOU KNOW IT* BY JACK HARTMANN
- *AH! BREATHE* BY MAR
- *WORK IT OUT WITH WORDS* BY JACK HARTMANN
- *MY FAMILY* BY THE LAURIE BERKNER BAND

Physical Development

I was always embarrassed to dance, sing, or make movements in front of people—including young children. I soon realized that it doesn't matter what adults think. If my students are having fun, they are engaged and, most importantly, learning.

Music often involves clapping, dancing, and playing instruments. These activities enhance both gross and fine motor skills. Keeping a beat, for example, improves coordination and body awareness. Playing instruments such as drums or shakers strengthens hand-eye coordination.

Structured musical activities can also teach students about spatial awareness and self-regulation. Early childhood music programs provide opportunities for children to experiment with sounds, movement, and creative expression.

SONGS FOR PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

- *HEAD, SHOULDERS, KNEES AND TOES*
- *SHAKE YOUR SILLIES OUT*
- *THE HOKEY POKEY*

Remember to be as silly as you want. Students love being engaged and seeing that their teacher can be playful too.

Cultural Awareness and Diversity

Introducing children to songs, instruments, and musical styles from different cultures nurtures respect for diversity. Music also connects children with their cultural roots, helping form a sense of identity and belonging.

I love incorporating songs from cultures different from my own. It is exciting and creates opportunities to learn more about the students in my care, while also building stronger connections between teachers and families.

SONGS FOR CULTURAL AWARENESS

- *PEOPLE ARE RAINBOWS TOO* BY THE KIBOOMERS
- *WE'RE ALL FRUIT SALAD!* BY THE WIGGLES
- *WE'RE ALL AMAZING!* BY LONDON RHYMES

Conclusion

In conclusion, I hope you gain confidence in using music in your classroom. There are so many songs and movement activities available that can help students learn and grow. It's okay to look silly or sing a little out of tune. Go with the flow and let music guide a fun-filled learning experience.

It took me years to become comfortable using music and movement in the classroom, but I now see the positive outcomes it creates. Music is truly one of the best teaching tools we have. Children learn much more easily when they are engaged, active, and having fun.

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Seeds of Knowledge

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Stay in the Know with ELCPH's *Seeds of Knowledge* newsletter! Be the first to hear about exclusive, limited-access trainings, events, and opportunities you won't find anywhere else. Every two weeks, our newsletter gives subscribers a front-row seat to:

- Early registration for high-demand trainings (often free!)
- Special opportunities shared directly with ELCPH to pass along to you.
- Giveaways and freebies you'll only hear about here.
- Invitations to upcoming webinars, in-person workshops, and virtual sessions.
- Important provider and educator news you won't want to miss!



Many of these opportunities fill up fast! Don't miss your chance to stay informed, get ahead, and take full advantage of what ELCPH and The Promise Institute have to offer.

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to subscribe!



VOICES OF GROWTH: EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATORS REFLECT ON THEIR PROFESSIONAL LEARNING JOURNEY

HEAR IT FROM OTHERS:

“The T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® Scholarship Program and T.E.A.C.H. W.R.A.P.® Scholarship Program has made a tremendous impact on my professional journey. Through their support, I am currently pursuing my Bachelor’s degree in Early Childhood Education — a goal that once felt out of reach.

These scholarships have provided not only financial assistance, but also encouragement and motivation to continue growing as an educator. Because of this opportunity, I am able to deepen my knowledge, strengthen my teaching practices, and better serve the children and families in my classroom. I am incredibly grateful for programs that invest in early childhood professionals and help turn educational goals into reality. I am incredibly thankful for this opportunity and for all of the support I have received throughout this journey.”



Sarah Babcock
Dayspring Academy – Little Scholars
VPK Teacher

HEAR IT FROM OTHERS:

“My experience in the Director’s course was both enriching and transformative. It challenged me to step outside of my comfort zone and to grow by embracing diverse perspectives and professional viewpoints. The class was composed of experienced early childhood educators who contributed valuable insights drawn from many years in the field, which greatly enhanced the depth and quality of our learning experience.

I would especially like to express my sincere appreciation for the exceptional dedication and guidance of Professor Eunice Lopez. Her commitment to each student’s individual growth and professional development made a lasting impact on my life. I am truly grateful for her mentorship and support throughout this journey.

As a Latina, and with English as my second language, there are moments when self-doubt can arise and one may question whether they are at the same level as others. However, this course allowed me to recognize my capabilities and strengthened my confidence. It inspired me to continue advancing my education in this field and to strive for excellence in my current role.

The knowledge and skills I acquired in this course have had a positive and meaningful impact on my professional practice. I have begun implementing what I learned with my staff and students, and I have already observed constructive growth and improvement within my educational environment.”



Derby Castillo
Assistant Director
Bexley Montessori



The Teach Bridge Scholarship acts as a “wrap scholarship” to the TEACH Children’s Forum Scholarship, supporting early educators in pursuing a higher education. Teach Bridge supplements the educator and sponsoring centers with the required costs, reducing the financial burden on educators and sponsoring centers.

Teach Bridge Scholarship



Unlock Your Future with the TEACH Wrap Scholarship!

Who Can Apply?

- Early childhood educators employed in a licensed child care facility in Pasco or Hernando
- Individuals working with children ages 0-5
- Applicants looking to pursue a degree or certification in early childhood education

What Does the Scholarship Cover?

- Tuition assistance for approved degree programs
- Support for textbooks and other required materials
- Scholarships for both part-time and full-time study options

Benefits of the TEACH Wrap Scholarship:

- Financial support to reduce the cost of continuing education
- Flexible funding options tailored to different educational programs
- Opportunity to grow your skills and career in early childhood education
- Contribute to a stronger, more educated workforce of early childhood educators



Visit the Promise Institute
<https://ece-elcph.talentlms.com/>

**APPLY
TODAY**

LENA GROW[®]

LENA Grow is an innovative, evidence-based professional development program designed to help infant, toddler, and preschool educators create equitable, robust language environments.

The LENA Grow Certification recognizes the commitment of our early childhood educators to enhancing early language development through innovative practices. Their dedication will have a positive impact on the children and families they serve!



Congratulations!

Early Achievers Academy, New Port Richey
East Pasco Academy, Dade City
Learn and Play Preschool, New Port Richey

25 SPOTLIGHT ON PROVIDERS

“ I learned that using words and engaging in back-and-forth communication with toddlers helps expand their vocabulary skills. ”
--Barbara Armitage
Early Achievers Academy



THE PROMISE INSTITUTE EXPERIENCE

The Early Learning Coalition of Pasco and Hernando Counties remains committed to strengthening the early childhood workforce and supporting providers across our community. In alignment with our mission *to ensure children are successful in school and in life*, the ELCPH Promise Institute continues to expand meaningful, relevant professional learning opportunities for early educators. Did you know the Promise Institute has broadened its training offerings to better meet the evolving needs of early childhood professionals.

Together, we believe that *every child, caregiver, and teacher deserves the best possible resources on their road to success*. The Promise Institute prioritizes creating “A Space to Grow” by offering high-quality, accessible professional development opportunities.

Recognizing the diverse needs of adult learners, the Promise Institute provides:

- Online learning options
- Hybrid training models
- Facilitated professional development experiences designed to build reflective practice and leadership capacity

In addition, the Promise Institute continues to host opportunities such as the Teach Bridge Scholarship, designed to support educators pursuing higher education while reducing financial strain on sponsoring programs. This scholarship complements the TEACH Early Childhood Florida initiative by expanding access to educational advancement pathways for early childhood professionals.

Through these expanded professional development offerings, the ELCPH Promise Institute remains dedicated to elevating the early learning workforce and strengthening the quality of care and education across Pasco and Hernando Counties.

Upcoming Trainings to Highlight

Interaction Essentials

The Interaction Essentials Training from Teachstone supports early childhood educators in strengthening the everyday interactions that help children learn and grow. Based on the CLASS (Classroom Assessment Scoring System) framework, this training focuses on the importance of positive teacher-child interactions that promote emotional support, classroom organization, and instructional learning. Through engaging examples and reflective activities, educators learn practical strategies to build warm relationships, encourage meaningful conversations, and support children's thinking and development. This training helps educators recognize how intentional interactions can create nurturing, responsive classrooms.

Family Engagement Best Practices Training

Offered in partnership with Teacher Created Materials through the Promise Institute. This online family engagement training is designed to empower families with practical, easy-to-use strategies that support young children's development and learning at home. Developed with best practices from Teacher Created Materials, this three-part webinar series guides families through simple, meaningful ways to strengthen learning routines, build early literacy skills, and spark curiosity through STEAM activities. Aligned with textbook: *Being your Child's most important teacher: A guide for families with young children*. Continue with the course units to learn how you can support your children's development and learning at home.

CLASS 2nd Edition Overview for Leaders

Discover the power of meaningful, high-quality interactions with CLASS 2nd Edition Overview for Leaders! This two-hour facilitated session provides leaders with a foundational introduction to CLASS as a system for supporting continuous quality improvement. The session closely aligns with the CLASS® 2nd Edition Pre-K-3rd Intro to Interactions for Educators training, with added content specifically for program leaders.

Yogapalooza - Mindfulness in the Classroom

Yogapalooza is a professional learning journey designed to help early childhood educators bring mindfulness, movement, and emotional wellness into their classrooms. Through engaging sessions, educators explore simple strategies such as mindful breathing, gentle movement, and yoga-inspired activities that support children's self-regulation, focus, and overall well-being. The hybrid Yogapalooza training provides a hands-on opportunity for educators to practice these techniques while learning how to incorporate them into daily classroom routines, including circle time, transitions, and calming moments. Participants leave with practical ideas and activities that can be easily implemented with infants, toddlers, and preschoolers.

Make & Take Learning Opportunities

The Make & Take Learning Opportunities provide early childhood educators with engaging, hands-on professional development experiences designed to inspire creativity and strengthen classroom practice. During these in-person sessions, educators explore beloved children's book authors such as Dr. Seuss, Eric Carle, Mo Willems, and Anna Dewdney. Participants learn about each author's storytelling style, themes, and the ways their books support early literacy and social-emotional development. Educators then take part in a hands-on "make and take" activity, where they design and create developmentally appropriate learning materials inspired by the featured books. These ready-to-use activities can be immediately implemented in their classrooms to encourage language development, creativity, and meaningful engagement for young children.

FSU Literacy Trainings for Early Childhood Educators

The online FSU Literacy Trainings provide early childhood educators with valuable strategies to support language and early literacy development in young children. Facilitated by trainer Dawn Espinoza, these engaging sessions guide educators through research-based practices that strengthen foundational literacy skills in the early learning classroom. Developed by Florida State University Center for Reading Research, the trainings focus on key components of early literacy, including vocabulary development, interactive read-alouds, phonological awareness, and meaningful conversations that support children's comprehension and communication skills. Through these online sessions, educators gain practical tools, resources, and instructional strategies they can immediately implement to create rich literacy environments and promote a lifelong love of reading and learning.



Keep the families you serve informed with the Parent Circle newsletter from ELCPH!

This month's issue is packed with valuable resources you can easily share with parents, including:

- Health and wellness insights
- Exclusive activity calendars
- Curated book and activity recommendations
- Family-friendly tips for everyday learning

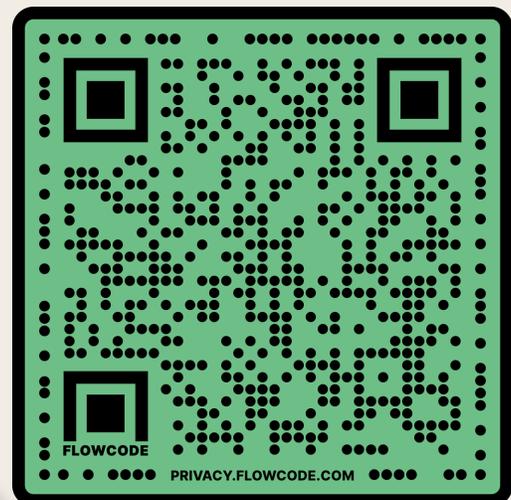


Whether you're a parent yourself or looking for trusted resources to support the families in your program, there's something for everyone. **Plus, there's still time for families to enter the Sensory Box Prize Giveaway!**

Share the Parent Circle today and help families stay informed, engaged, and connected.



Scan Here to Read The Latest Parent Circle:



PARTNERSHIP



PNC



PNC Bank team members will be volunteering each month at the ELCPH offices to lead creative arts & crafts projects alongside local childcare providers. These hands-on activities will spark imagination, encourage learning, and create meaningful moments between PNC volunteers and our youngest learners.

Together, we're bringing fun and engaging financial education into early learning centers— sharing helpful tools and resources with Pre-K families to build strong foundations from the very start.





LAYING THE FOUNDATION: **WHY EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION MATTERS**

Ashley K. Fugate
Art Instructor
Web of Wisdom

“

children learn through play, exploration, and guided activities.

Early childhood education lays the groundwork for future success. It's more than childcare. It's a crucial period for cognitive, social, and emotional development. High-quality early education programs provide a structured environment where children learn through play, exploration, and guided activities. These experiences help build essential skills like problem-solving, critical thinking, and communication, setting the stage for academic achievement later.

Early childhood education fosters social and emotional growth. Children learn how to interact with peers, share, take turns, and resolve conflicts. These social skills are vital for building positive relationships and navigating the complexities of the social world. Additionally, early childhood helps children develop emotional intelligence, teaching them to recognize and manage their feelings, which is essential for mental well-being and resilience.

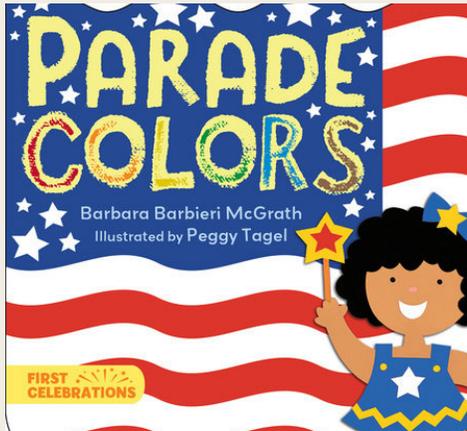
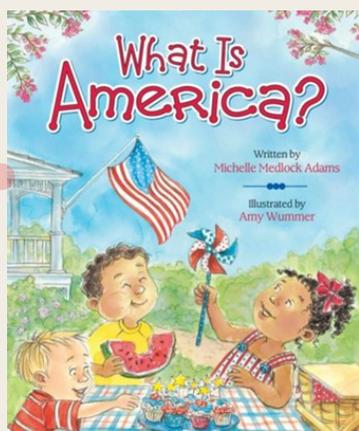
Investing in early childhood education yields long-term benefits for individuals and society as a whole. Studies have shown that children who attend early education programs are more likely to graduate high school, attend college, and secure stable employment. By providing a strong foundation in the early years, we can empower children to reach their full potential and contribute to a more prosperous and equitable society.



CELEBRATE LITERACY WEEK, FLORIDA!



Dawn Espinoza- Zephyrhills Early Learning Academy



Dr. Steve Knobl - Discovery Point Suncoast Crossings



Board Member David Slovut - Kids Stuff Preschool



Board Member Lisa Campos - DaySpring Academy

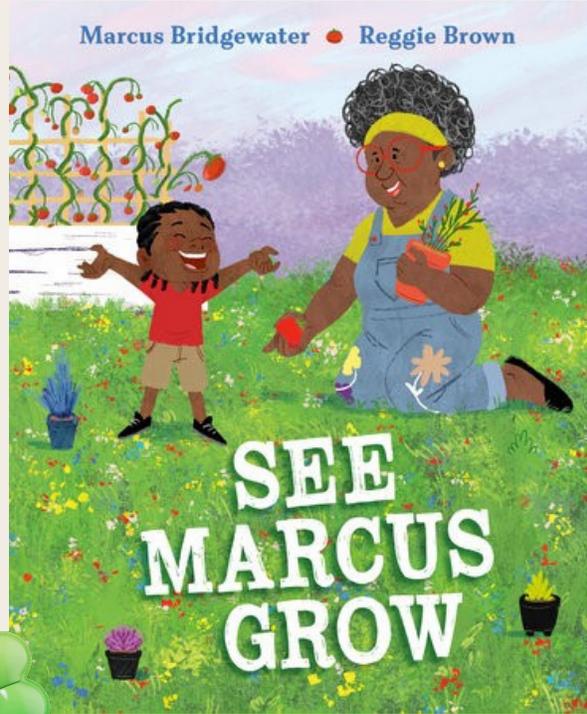
★ January 26 - January 30, 2025

Jumpstart
Read for the Record
20TH ANNIVERSARY

February 26, 2026

Over 2 million readers and thousands of classrooms, libraries, and communities came together to celebrate early literacy.

Special thanks to our volunteer readers and all participating childcare providers!



ELCPH
Board Member
Danielle Taylor and
DeMore Patrick from the
Florida Department of
Health in Spring Hill.
Thank you for reading at
Little Bees Early Learning
Center!



ELCPH Betsy Clotter at
St. Thomas Aquinas Early Childhood Center,
New Port Richey.

United Way of Hernando County, Executive/CEO,
Angie Bonfardino-Walasek reading at
A Brighter Future Preschool II in Spring Hill.





Protect your child's future, in *just* 3-minutes!

Stress and everyday parenting challenges, when ignored or become overwhelming, can lead to complex issues later in life that impact your child for their lifetime.

HELP YOUR FAMILY:



COPE with
stress and
anxiety



INCREASE
fulfillment,
hope, and
resiliency



IMPROVE
youth academic,
emotional, physical,
and social
performance



DECREASE
youth disruptive
behaviors,
substance abuse,
and suicidal risk

Emotional Vaccines is a resource that is comprised of 2-to-3-minute, bilingual videos that are strategically formulated to offset future crisis situations for children by delivering proactive, actionable, non-judgmental tips for parents. The culturally diverse, science-based content can help ease the difficult choices and decisions required to be made by parents daily. Please note that all video content is free of any social or political agendas and empowers adults to accept knowledge from an unbiased, trusted expert.



Free Resiliency Library



For more information, contact 866.684.2007 or dennis@emotionalvaccines.com



Save the Date!

2026 WEDU/PBS KIDS Training Sessions



Register Early for Upcoming WEDU/PBS KIDS Virtual Trainings

Designed for early childhood educators, these engaging virtual sessions support professional development, promote school readiness, and provide hands-on PBS resources to enhance learning.

Each training is from 6:30 - 8:00 PM.

1.5 in-service hours per session!

Registration: Log into **TALENT** and search for the courses below:

☀️ **February 24** ~~Civics for Early Learners~~

☀️ **March 26** ~~STEM for Young Learners~~

☀️ **May 11** Outdoor Learning

☀️ **July 28** Healthy Habits

☀️ **August 25** Exploring Weather (Featuring the all-new PBS KIDS show "Weather Hunters")

☀️ **October 20** Foundational Math Skills for Young Learners

☀️ **November 19** Literacy in the Early Childhood Classroom



Outdoor Learning Training

Grab your magnifying glass and explore the great outdoors with WEDU PBS!

This training brings full lesson plans to educators that allow young learners to engage their senses while investigating nature.

Outdoor learning encourages students to be curious, ask questions and find the answers through exploration. Providers will leave this training with multiple exciting activities straight from PBS KIDS programming.

**Register
on the
Promise
Institute!**

**May 11,
2026**



**6:30 -
8:00 PM**



MarcoPolo Learning



bring curriculum **To Life**

The Benefits of MarcoPolo in Your Classroom

What if your lesson plans, videos, and open-ended questions were already prepped for you? MarcoPolo is the solution to a busy educator's schedule. This innovative digital platform is designed to help educators enhance classroom learning while strengthening engagement with families. Best of all, access to MarcoPolo is free for educators in Pasco and Hernando Counties through a special collaboration with the Early Learning Coalition. With your account, you'll gain access to a comprehensive library of videos, teaching resources, and professional development opportunities. These tools help educators boost productivity and inspire creativity in the classroom.

“The MarcoPolo app has been a wonderful addition to my VPK classroom. The interactive videos and educational games keep my children engaged while helping them explore important topics like science, math, and language in a playful, age-appropriate way. I've also received a lot of compliments from parents about the app. It supports curiosity and independent thinking, and I've seen how it reinforces concepts we're already teaching in class.

– **Stephany B., VPK Educator**

- **1,500+ multilingual educational videos and lesson plans aligned with common early childhood curricula (Head Start, Frog Street, Creative Curriculum, and more)**
- **Strategies to guide questions, discussions, and instruction**
- **A school-to-home connection through the MarcoPolo for Families App, extending learning beyond the classroom with playlist sharing, activities, and video messages for parents and students.**

Activate your free MarcoPolo account today! Contact Wynter Reese at w.reese@elcph.org to get started.



Family Engagement: Best Practices

This self-paced family engagement training is designed to empower families with practical, easy-to-use strategies that support young children's development and learning at home.

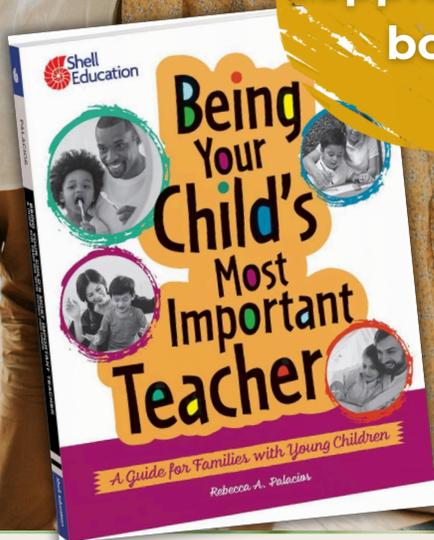
Developed using best practices from Teacher Created Materials, this three-part online training series guides families through simple, meaningful ways to:

- ★ **Strengthen daily learning routines**
- ★ **Build early literacy skills**
- ★ **Spark curiosity through engaging STEAM activities**

Participants will receive a free course textbook: *Being Your Child's Most Important Teacher: A Guide for Families with Young Children* by Rebecca A. Palacios.



Includes supplemental book!



Access the course here!

Elevate Language in Your Classroom!

Infant and Toddler Training



The **Nemours Reading BrightStart! Infant and Toddler Training** is a developmentally appropriate curriculum designed to support infants' and toddlers' early language, literacy, and overall development. This training equips early childhood educators with effective strategies to **create engaging, meaningful learning experiences that build a strong foundation for future school success.**



April 18, 2026



9:00 AM - 3:00 PM



ELCPH Office
12107 Majestic Blvd.
Hudson, Florida 34667



Hosted by ELCPH Dawn Espinoza
and Samantha Taylor



6 In-Service Hours

FREE
CURRICULUM
UPON
COMPLETION!

- Supports early language, literacy, and engagement skills
- Uses hands-on experiences, quality books, and sensory-rich materials
- Addresses learning across all developmental domains
- Research-based and highly effective instructional curriculum
- Ideal for programs seeking to strengthen infant and toddler instruction

Important Notice:

- Directors must agree to implement a new curriculum to be approved for Infant/Toddler Nemours Training.

To Register: Contact Samantha Taylor at
s.taylor@elcph.org

SAVE
the DATE



2 / 2 7 / 2 7



I am
so
excited!



Spill the
Beans!



WORK of the Heart



THE IMPORTANCE OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATORS CAN'T BE OVERSTATED.

Our children are our greatest treasure. They light up our lives and bring hope for the future. When it comes to their education, especially in the important formative years, the importance of the providers and teachers surrounding them is paramount.

May 8th is National Provider Appreciation Day and the perfect time to celebrate the caregivers we entrust our children to all year long.

“

The team at the Early Learning Coalition of Pasco & Hernando understands just how valuable our providers and early childhood educators are to the community. We want to make a point of honoring our preschool teachers for all they do for children and families throughout the year, explained Dr. Steve Knobl.

”

“

We have children who enroll at age one or two, and they'll stay with us till the end of the VPK school year. We get attached to them. By the time that child is four or five, Learn & Play Preschool's been with that child for two-thirds of their life. The impact we've made is very large, shared Haris Horozovic, owner and operator of Learn & Play Preschool and Provider Representative on the ELC Board of Directors.

”



Whatever way you choose to honor early childhood teachers, it will be appreciated. For them, it's not just a job – it's work of the heart.

Full article can be read - May 2026 Issue
New Port Richey - CityLifestyle Magazine
By Joann Chang, Managing Editor





WRITE FOR US! A GREAT OPPORTUNITY TO COLLABORATE.

SPOTLIGHT on Providers is published annually by the Early Learning Coalition of Pasco and Hernando Counties, Inc. for the provider community. It is distributed electronically to all providers and is also available on the website at www.elcph.org.

Authors are encouraged to submit readable, practical manuscripts that reflect and advance the knowledge base of the profession. Manuscripts should be prepared in current APA style (7th Edition). This style includes: typed, double-spaced, wide margins, and cover page with a working title, authors' full names, degrees, affiliations, and e-mail address for the lead author.

Manuscripts published by ELCPH address both the continuing interests of early childhood professionals and emerging ideas and issues in the field. Among topics considered are emergent curriculum for children from birth through age 8, effective assessment strategies, effective classroom practices that reflect sound theory and research, program administration, relationships with families, and public policy effecting early care and education.

The length of journal manuscripts ranges from 1 to 3 pages, including complete references. Please submit manuscripts as e-mail attachments to expedite the review process. Send to s.sabadishin@elcph.org with the subject heading SPOTLIGHT Manuscript. Manuscripts are reviewed and processed electronically. Manuscripts that are submitted in hard copy will not be reviewed.

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early
learning
coalition

OF PASCO & HERNANDO



A Space To Grow

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