

Early Learning Coalition
of Florida's Heartland, Inc.

www.elcfh.org

ELCFH Quality Committee Meeting
Thursday, October 23, 2025 at 9:00 AM via ZOOM

Zoom meeting link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82390397434?pwd=XA6Rj5xWgavOy9lYrSWpt2B4cCx1bK.1>

Meeting ID: 823 9039 7434

Password: 627021

Phone: +1 305 224 1968

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Item 1: ELCFH Quality Committee (ZOOM) Meeting Minutes- October 23, 2025

Committee/ Board Members Present: Susan Norris, Trena Miller, Gail Werley, John Stover, Leigh Ann Moccia, Alma Ovalle, Billie-Jo Moretta, Maria Castillo, Maria Magowan Nancy Ebrahimi-Driggers, Rick Pucci, Susan Flemming

Staff Members Present: Anne Brewer, Beth Mueller, Janet Lane, Pam Hillestad, Kelly Wertenbach, Tina Yates

Guests Present: Amber Chudoba, Bianca Petco, Altagracia Lajara-Paredes, Casia Merlos

Agenda Items	Item Overview	Comments/ Actions
1. Opening	The meeting opened at 9:00 AM. Introductions were made. The 8.14.25 Quality Committee meeting minutes were reviewed.	
2. Committee Discussion Items	<p>a. ELCFH position statement development: local definition of school readiness</p> <p>Committee members engaged in a lively conversation on the definition of School Readiness. The goal is to ultimately develop a formal statement that could be adopted by the ELCFH Board and utilized in community based conversations. Definitions from nationally recognized early childhood experts were provided. Dr. David Elkind's work on the concern for hurried children and the reality of socio-emotional skills being in place prior to kindergarten entry was highlighted.</p> <p>Overarching issues that impact a child's readiness for school entry were identified and included: child behavioral issues that are dismissed/ not addressed, children being expelled from their preschool programs, teachers and parents not understanding the value of developmental screening (ASQ), and stakeholders not understanding the impact poverty has on child development. Training needs surrounding developmental screening for parents and teachers, the cycle of poverty (Ruby Payne) and ACES were discussed. High child to teacher ratios with inadequate pay was voiced as a critical component that consistently affects quality.</p> <p><u>The committee agreed that an ELCFH Board approved statement would be good especially for helping community members understand the reality of what children need prior to school entry (especially those who are deemed at-risk or living in poverty.). A draft statement will be brought back to the next Quality Committee meeting for further discussion.</u></p> <p>b. Using surveys to strengthen and inform childcare businesses:</p> <p>The committee discussed the value of regular surveys of parents and staff as well as surveys from those exiting the program.. It was noted that surveys can help inform improvements for a childcare business which can lead to business growth. Review of key areas such as safety, curriculum, staff management, and parent communication can support providers in creating specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART) goals, ultimately leading to</p>	

	<p>higher quality care. To support this effort, a two-page handout was developed and the committee talked about a sample jot form based survey. Allowing anonymous survey responses was encouraged for honest feedback.</p> <p><u>The committee agreed that the information provided in addition to a sample jotform survey would be useful to providers. This will be a training piece at the next ELCFH contracted provider meeting.</u></p> <p>c. Hurricane Season- child care program COOP/ emergency preparations- Hurricane Disaster funding follow-up:</p> <p>The ELCFH has been granted an award from DEL (via the federal government) specific to needed funding for Hurricane Ian. A plan has been developed and the ELCFH continues to work with DEL to assure the supplies and equipment purchased are in alignment with the grant guidance. <u>The overarching goal of the grant is to support providers in developing unique COOP plans for their facilities along with necessary equipment. This will continue to develop with reporting out to the committee.</u></p> <p>d. Directors meetings- low participation in Highlands:</p> <p>The ELCFH will facilitate one more meeting in Highlands County in an effort to improve participation. <u>Committee members agreed that direct phone calls to providers by providers and ELCFH specialists to encourage attendance would be helpful.</u></p>
3. Healthy Families	<p>The DeSoto/ Hardee program provided the quarterly performance measures report (7.1.25 – 9.30.25) with some indicators highlighted where percentages were not yet achieved. The Quality Assurance visit report was completed and the summary provided. The program continues to work towards meeting required goal within each indicator.</p> <p>The Charlotte program also provided the quarterly performance measures report (7.1.25 – 9.30.25). It was noted that out of the 20 measured performance outcomes, 18 were met or exceeded.</p>
4. Open Forum	<p>An announcement was made that DCF trainings are free- providers are encouraged to take advantage of this resource.</p>
5. Adjourn	<p>The next Quality Committee meeting will be held on Thursday, January 15, 2026 at 9AM via ZOOM. The meeting adjourned at 10:12 AM.</p>

Item 2.a: ELCFH Position Statement Development **DRAFT:**

Defining School Readiness

Dr. David Elkind (Tufts University), a renowned child psychologist is quoted as saying:

"The skills a child needs to succeed in most kindergartens are not knowing numbers and letters, but rather....

- *being able to communicate,*
- *follow instructions,*
- *and work cooperatively with other children."*¹²

This is a shift to more traditional ideas of school readiness which tend to apply more weight on the ABC's, 123's, naming the days of the week and tying shoes.

The Early Learning Coalition of Florida's Heartland (ELCFH) has long held concern for the social and emotional development of children receiving childcare services in the service area of Charlotte, DeoSoto, Hardee and Highlands counties. Children navigating the effects of trauma and poverty can struggle in their early learning programs, leading to lost opportunities due to the inability to make friends with other children, inability to self-regulate big emotions, or lack of needed continuity due to program suspension or even expulsion. The ELCFH, believes that supporting children's development, assuring basic needs are met, and providing opportunities for supportive relationships are critical to later success in school.

We stand by the belief understand that the child's readiness for school not solely the responsibility of the child, parent or preschool teacher- each has an important role!

Ready Children: Basic needs are met- food security, medical home, family stability, consistent housing. Continuity of care is experienced as a child is enrolled in an early learning program and able to make and maintain supportive relationships with adults and other children. Developmental needs of children are identified and addressed early. Children can communicate, follow instructions, and work cooperatively with other children as they prepare for kindergarten entry.

Ready Families: Parents understand their role as their child's first teacher. They are engaged in their child's program and have regular, open communication with their child's teacher. They support their children through daily predictable routines and bonding activities such as engaged conversation, reading aloud, playing games together.

Ready Schools: Early Learning Programs and Kindergarten classrooms understand how to teach individual children. Programs are developmentally appropriate/ hands-on (concrete), literacy focused and encourages parent participation.

Ready Communities: The immediate community offers support services to address family needs especially any basic need that is unmet, child developmental needs that exceed the expertise of the classroom, and provide families/ individuals with the overarching sense of belonging.

¹ <https://especiallyforchildren.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/10/What-is-School-Readiness.pdf>;

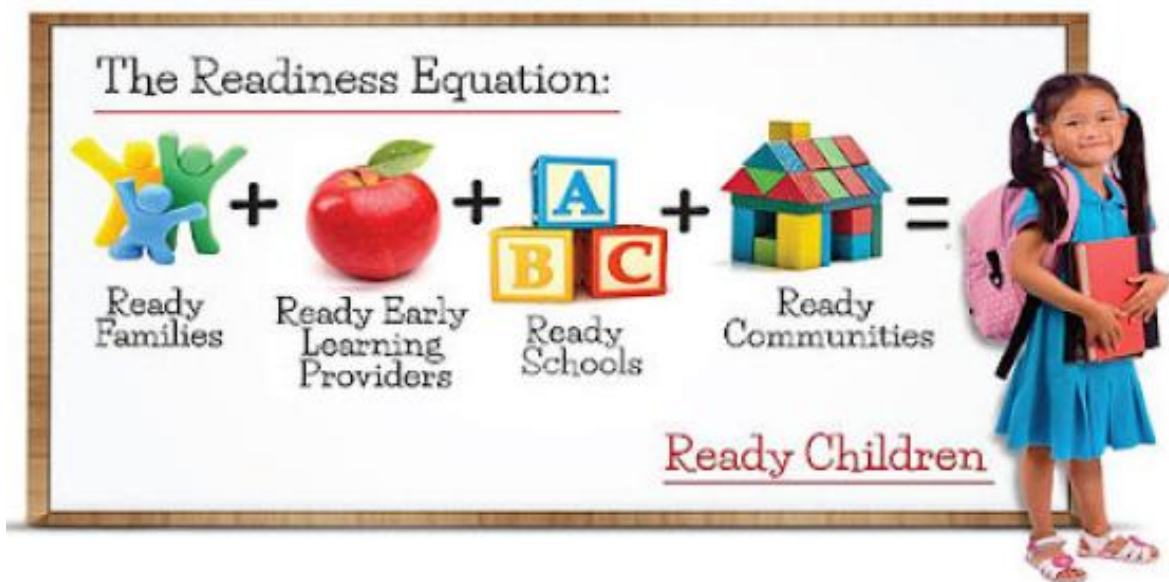
² "Some Misunderstandings of School Readiness" by David Elkind, Exchange Magazine, 03/08

DRAFT

The ELCFH defines school readiness as the child's ability to function within the classroom in a social-emotional capacity that promotes learning and positive interactions and supports continuity for the full term of the child's program. From there, learning is completely possible and the stage is set to apply academic content.

Basic measurable elements to support social-emotional development as identified through developmental screening include:

- Number of children age birth to five who are eligible for screening vs the total number screened.
 - Number of children noted as "typically developing".
- Number of children suspended / expelled (due to child issue, not parent issue)
 - Support provided to child experiencing suspension/ expulsion to move into a program with "goodness of fit".
- Number of children with developmental concerns warranting early intervention who (with parent consent) receive needed support services.
- Anecdotal notes of ELCFH provided services/ activities and the outcomes for individual children.
- Success stories showcasing a child with a concern, what was done to address the concern/ support the child, and the final outcome.



DRAFT

Further food for thought on school readiness from nationally recognized entities:

The American Academy of Pediatrics, Council on Early Childhood, Council on School Health: “School Readiness” (Technical Report, 8.1.19) states: *“All of a child’s early experiences, whether at home, in childcare, or in other preschool settings, are educational. When early experiences are consistent, developmentally sound, and emotionally supportive, children learn optimally and develop resilience for life. To focus only on the education of children beginning with kindergarten is to ignore the science of early development and to deny the importance of early experiences.”*³

Head Start states: *“School readiness is foundational across early childhood systems and programs. It means children are ready for school, families are ready to support their children’s learning, and schools are ready for children. Head Start views school readiness as children possessing the skills, knowledge, and attitudes necessary for success in school and for later learning and life. Physical, cognitive, social, and emotional development are all essential ingredients of school readiness.”*⁴

National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC):

“....discussions of school readiness must consider at least three critical factors:

(1) the diversity of children’s early life experiences as well as inequity in experiences;

(2) the wide variation in young children’s development and learning; and

*(3) the degree to which school expectations of children entering kindergarten are reasonable, appropriate, and supportive of individual differences.”*⁵

National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC- Dr. Dan Gartrell): *“People used to think children were ready for kindergarten if they could say the ABC’s, count, identify colors, and write their first name. Readiness was always more complicated than that, and new brain research is helping us understand what readiness really is. Readiness doesn’t mean just knowing the academic basics. It means a child has a willing attitude and confidence in the process of learning: a healthy state of mind.”*⁶

³ [School Readiness | Pediatrics | American Academy of Pediatrics](#)

⁴ [School Readiness | HeadStart.gov](#)

⁵ [PSREADY98.PDF](#)

⁶ [Readiness: Not a State of Knowledge, but a State of Mind | NAEYC](#)

2.e ELCFH Updates:

NEW- Teacher Feature- *Alaina from Joyful Noise Learning Center*

**REAL NEWS
FROM REAL TEACHERS**

Early Learning Coalition
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SUCCESS STORY-HOW VISUALS SUPPORTS CHANGED MY CLASSROOM

Note from Alaina
One Year Old Teacher at
Joyful Noise Learning Center

After attending the Infant-Toddler CLASS Group coaching, I realized something important. I had expectations for my students, but I wasn't clearly communicating them. I wanted to build stronger relationships and help children feel understood. That's when I decided to try visual supports.

1 What I Did

- Printed and laminated the "Rules and Expectations" guide for 1- and 2-year-olds. (Available on Head Start's website.)
- Displayed it on the wall and created a key ring with individual rules.
- Introduced one rule each week during circle time and reinforced it throughout the day.
- Turned social stories into books that children could access anytime.

2 The Results

- Children became more independent and excited about following rules.
- Visuals helped redirect behavior in positive ways.
- Engagement and communication increased-toddlers even initiated conversations!
- I saw growth in confidence, social skills, and overall development.

3 Advice from Alaina

Try it! You can create a visual for anything. If you want to connect with a child, make a visual they can connect to.

SEEING SUCCESS: CONNECTING VISUAL SUPPORTS TO EARLY LEARNING STANDARDS FOR ONE YEAR OLDS

**CIRCLE TIME AREA –
EMOTION CHART
& STORY PROP BASKET**

Show simple faces for happy, sad, mad, and include props for storytelling. Tip: Use real photos or clear illustrations. Rotate props weekly to keep engagement high. This supports Language & Literacy and Social Emotional Development

**DAILY ROUTINE WALL –
PICTURE SCHEDULE**

Show snack, play, nap, and goodbye with real-life images. Tip: Keep the schedule simple and consistent. Use First-Then Board. Point to it during transitions to support Social Studies Domain- recognize and respond to schedules and predictability.

**VISUALS IN A
ONE-YEAR-OLD CLASSROOM**

ENTRY AREA
CIRCLE TIME AREA
EMOTION CHART
DAILY ROUTINE WALL
STORY PROP BASKET
PLAY AREA
ENVIRONMENTAL LABELS

Each month, we will be highlighting a teacher from one of our early learning programs to recognize the wonderful work happening in classrooms across our service area. This feature will celebrate educators who go above and beyond to create nurturing, engaging, and high-quality learning environments for children and families.

The Teacher Feature is an opportunity to:

- Showcase strong teacher-child interactions
- Highlight creative, intentional, and developmentally appropriate practices
- Celebrate dedication, passion, and positive impact on children and families
- Share ideas and inspiration with other educators across our community

Featured teachers may be recognized through coalition communications such as email blasts, social media, or our website (with appropriate permissions).

We invite directors, administrators, and staff to send in recommendations of teachers from your programs who you feel would be a great fit for this monthly spotlight. This is a wonderful way to recognize educators who are making a difference every day. Our CDE team will be on the lookout for these amazing people as well!

Celebrate Literacy Week: Jan 26 – 30, 2026 THEME: Read, White and Blue: 250 Chapters of America!

The books are *Parade Colors* by Barbara Barbieri McGrath (infant/toddler) and *What Is America?* by Michelle Medlock Adams (preschool). CDE will be delivering the books as soon as they arrive. DEL has provided activities for providers and families to do with the children with a Patriotic theme which are included in the ELCFH blast.

SUBJECT: Celebrate Literacy Week, Florida! 2026

The Florida Department of Education's (FDOE) Division of Early Learning (DEL) is once again collaborating with FDOE's *Just Read, Florida!* office, planning the eighteenth annual statewide *Celebrate Literacy Week, Florida! 2026* events scheduled for January 26-30, 2026.

This year, the theme is *Read, White and Blue: 250 Chapters of America!* With this theme in mind, this year's books are *Parade Colors* by Barbara Barbieri McGrath (infant/toddler) and *What Is America?* by Michelle Medlock Adams (preschool).

Please mark your calendars for a simultaneous read aloud on Wednesday, January 28, 2026, at 10 a.m. EST. Providers will spread the love of literacy in their homes, centers and schools by reading *Parade Colors* or *What Is America*. Please share the attached activities that celebrate this year's exciting theme with your School Readiness and Voluntary Prekindergarten private and public providers serving infants, toddlers and preschool age children.

Lesson plan implementation: (excerpt of email sent to providers)

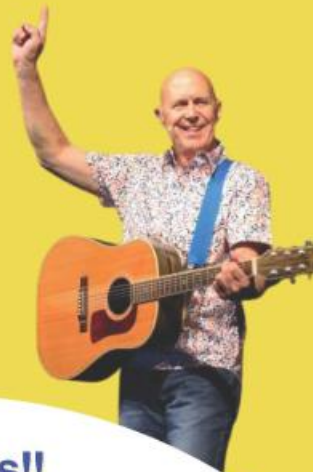
The CDE team will be offering support to teaching staff focused on the development and implementation of lesson planning. Thoughtful use of lesson plans is not only a program requirement, but also an important part of supporting children's learning and development. As part of this support, technical assistance documentation will include a brief reference to how lesson plans are being implemented in the classroom. During visits, CDE Specialists will look for the materials and activities noted in the lesson plans and engage in brief conversations with teachers to better understand how plans are used throughout the day. ELCFH CDE Specialists are available to work with provider to support lesson planning and implementation in a way that is practical, meaningful, and responsive to the needs of the children in your care.

CDE Lead- Child Support Specialist- change!

Tracy Pipitone, the ELCFH CDE Lead, will be working closely with the CDE staff to strengthen partnerships with families and teachers—especially in supporting children who may benefit from extra help. She will be working closely with families and providers in all four counties to support children in the classroom. The goal is to provide individualized support for children and connect families with the resources needed to best support their child at a deeper level. The CDE team will work collaboratively with Tracy to help the teachers better understand development and challenging behaviors.

2026 ELCFH Provider Event

February 21, 2026
9am-12pm



Featuring:
Stephen Fite,
Award-winning
musician/writer!

Door Prizes!!

**\$25.00 REGISTRATION
BREAKFAST INCLUDED!**

Check-In: 8:00am - 8:45am

First Baptist Church of Fort Ogden
6831 SW Senate St.
Arcadia, FL 34269

Please register on our website at:
<https://www.paypal.com/hcp/payment/K3RXERLHMP5C2>

- Stephen's presentations are music-filled and motivational, but more importantly, informative and full of ideas educators can use immediately in their classroom.

Please contact Beth Mueller at bmueller@elcfh.org
for more information.

Early Learning Coalition
of Florida's Heartland, Inc.

DIVISION OF
Early Learning
FLORIDA'S EARLY LEARNING SYSTEM



ELCFH 2026 Provider Event:

Registration for the ELCFH 2026 Provider event is underway. We will be offering breakfast items from Chick-Fil-A as well as other selections such as yogurt, fruit, coffee and water. Stephen Fite is our guest presenter and he will be sharing fun musical activities to take back to the classroom. There will be raffle items from partnering vendors and small "goodie bags" for each participant. This is a half-day event and should be tons of fun! Spaces are filling up fast- visit the ELCFH website www.elcfh.org to register!

Item 3: Healthy Families Charlotte

HEALTHY FAMILIES CHARLOTTE

Performance Measures (Quarterly)

(10/1/2025 - 12/31/2025)

Performance Measures	Percentage Achieved
Eighty (80) percent of all families will enroll in the program prenatally or within the first three months after the birth of the focus child.	N/D = 3/3 = 100%
Ninety (90) percent of families are assessed within 30 days of enrollment.	N/D = 4/4 = 100%
Eighty (80) percent of participants that enroll prenatally will have the Edinburgh Postnatal Depression Scale (EPDS) administered to them at least once prenatally.	N/D = 4/4 = 100%
Eighty (80) percent of participants will have the EPDS administered to them within the designated time period after the birth of the focus child.	N/D = 18/18 = 100%
Eighty (80) percent of participants will have the EPDS administered to them within the designated time period for any subsequent pregnancies.	N/D = 1/1 = 100%
Ninety (90) percent of participants will be administered the CHEERS Check-In (CCI) Tool according to schedule.	N/D = 37/39 = 95%
Eighty-five (85) percent of participants will have the baseline HFPI administered to them within the designated time period.	N/D = 9/11 = 82%
Eighty-five (85) percent of participants will have the subsequent interval of the HFPI administered to them according to the designated intervals for the tool.	N/D = 10/11 = 91%
Eighty-five (85) percent of participants who were low on one or more HFPI subscales will improve on at least one of the low subscales from baseline to six months.	N/D = 5/6 = 83%
Ninety (90) percent of families will develop a Family Goal Plan with their home visitor within the first 90 days of enrollment.	N/D = 21/21 = 100%
Eighty (80) percent of primary participants that close on level three, level four or complete the program will have improved or maintained self-sufficiency while enrolled in the program.	N/D = 1/1 = 100%
Ninety (90) percent of focus children will receive age appropriate developmental screenings according to schedule using the Ages and Stages Questionnaire, Third Edition (ASQ-3).	N/D = 18/20 = 90%
Ninety (90) percent of focus children will receive age appropriate social-emotional screenings according to schedule using the Ages and Stages Questionnaire: Social Emotional, Second Edition (ASQ:SE-2).	N/D = 11/11 = 100%
Eighty (80) percent of focus children will be up-to-date with immunizations at 24 months of age.	N/D = 2/2 = 100%
Eighty-five (85) percent of focus children will be up-to-date with well-child checks at 24 months of age.	N/D = 2/2 = 100%
Eighty-five (85) percent of focus children over 24 months old will have the most recent well-child checks according to the schedule.	N/D = 3/3 = 100%
Ninety (90) percent of focus children enrolled in the site six months or longer will be linked to a medical provider.	N/D = 33/33 = 100%
Ninety (90) percent of primary participants enrolled in the site six months or longer will be linked to a medical provider.	N/D = 30/30 = 100%
Eighty (80) percent of mothers enrolled in the project will not have a subsequent pregnancy within two years of the focus child's birth.	N/D = 58/58 = 100%
Seventy-five (75) percent of participants will have received at least seventy-five (75) percent of home visits according to the participant level.	N/D = 40/53 = 75%

Note: N = numerator D = denominator A result of Indeterminate means the denominator (D) value is 0. Bold numbers met goals.