



**Item:**

Early Childhood Learning Collaborative

**Requested Action:**

The Board is asked to receive this update.

**Background:**

Previously called the Early Childhood Learning Network, the Early Childhood Learning Collaborative was established in 2023 by the Children's Trust of Alachua County. It was created in response to moving the current early childhood learning initiative into a quality improvement system. It was also intended to rename the quarterly local meetings established by early childhood community leaders in partnership with the Children's Movement of Florida.

. In March 2023, the Trust staff were also tasked by the Board to:

- Convene local Early Learning Experts/Leadership from Baby Gator and Santa Fe Little School to create a network of collaboration and community transformation as well as understand their federal mandate to create a system of learning for other childcare systems.

The meeting was held in 2023 and all early learning businesses and experts in Alachua County were invited to attend. The feedback from this gathering was wrapped into the strategic planning activities.

**Update:**

Using the [Florida's Early Learning Roadmap](#) as a guide, the Alachua County Early Childhood Learning Collaborative meet in June 2025 to create a local strategy to implement the roadmap in Alachua County across three areas:

**Thrive Parents**

- o Workgroup Leaders- Yolanda Hagley and Stacey Williams
- o Workgroup Planning - November 14, December 3, December 16
- o Workgroup Meeting- Tentatively scheduled for January 7
- o The next meeting is structuring application and selection process for caregiver workgroup participation, reviewing and recommending stipend criteria, reviewing

recommendations from roadmap to determine best path, creating agenda for kickoff meeting, and establishing meeting timeline.

### **Early Learning Educator Workforce and Supports**

- Workgroup Leaders- Elizabeth Woods, Russell Scoates, and Arlene Lambert
- Workgroup Planning- November 14, December 2, December 16
- Workgroup Meeting- Tentatively scheduled for January 14
- The next meeting will be finalizing the roadmap recommendations, determining meeting cadence and timeline, and creating agenda for the next meeting.

### **System Coordination and Resources**

- Workgroup Leaders- Bonnie Bowman, Terri Robinson, and Dorothy Thomas
- Workgroup Planning – August 21, September 4, September 26
- Workgroup Meeting-
  - October 7- Collaborative Learning Session- Special Needs and Early Intervention Resources
    - Registered 40
    - Attended 27
    - Purpose: To learn more about the early intervention and special need resources available in the county and outside of the county. Organizations were invited to:
      1. Walk us through what they do, how they do it, who carries it out, and how it's funded? How do they sustain this work financially?
      2. What services do they provide, and how are they delivered?
      3. Who implements these supports, and how are they funded?
      4. How do the services include children who are not part of School Readiness or VPK programs?
      5. How does their work connect with support for families and childcare professionals?
  - Most Valuable Take Aways
    - Connections
    - Innovative solutions to expand the role of the teacher, expand the capacity of our early learning providers, and drive lasting impact for the evolving needs of the child
    - It was valuable to hear about pressing concerns for providers in our community.

- I received the name of a resource for kids who have yet to be diagnosed with a disability
  - The different resources available
  - Program and family needs are greater than community ability to respond. But decision makers and funders have gathered with potential to begin to strategically address some needs.
  - The fact that our community is building a solid network for providers to share
  - I was grateful to hear directly from the people who are out in the community where the needs and gaps exist.
  - Extended explanation of the CARD services
  - Excited about the opportunity to gain knowledge to better serve our community
  - Learning about resources.
  - Issues we have in common and potential solutions
  - Collaboration and resources
  - I love the information shared by Early Steps and CARD. Great resources.
  - Russell Scoates is a resource for how to serve children with special needs and their families. Help Me Grow is a service that connects children with resources.
- October 21 - System Coordination & Resource Workgroup - Learning Session Action Planning Meeting
    - Registered 40
    - Attended 32
    - Purpose: To move from identifying gaps and wish list ideas to defining actionable strategies that improve systems of care for children with special needs in Alachua County. The meeting included 3 breakout sessions:
      - On-site and Mobile Intervention Services
      - Professional Development and Provider Support
      - Family Navigation and Integrated Intake System
    - Most Valuable Take-Aways
      - Collaborations of many resources
      - Partnership, planning, and execution
      - We collectively know what is needed - now we must figure out how to get the ball rolling (and the funding in place!)
      - I want to help lead the charge in securing an OSEP grant
      - Increasing in person training
      - Progress and action plans are happening now
      - A coordinator/facilitator is needed for accountability and logistics

- Importance of non-virtual, in-person training
- Importance of mental health support for children, families, and staff
- Learning more about community partners
- Coordinating resources and organizing some of the actionable ideas
- The group recommended:
  - Dual model of training educators while also providing services
  - Lean on Help Me Grow Alachua for system enhancements
  - Explore OT/ST equal access centers for support
  - Creating a framework for support
  - Learn more about the federal grant through Anita Zucker Center
- November 4- Check In meeting- Cancelled
- December 2- Action Step-Follow-up meeting with Anita Zucker Center
  - Purpose: Follow-up discussion from the Special Need and Early Intervention Resource Meeting regarding federal grants funding discussion and discussing the framework for implementing direct services in childcare environments.
- December 3- Tentative Introduction and Learning Meeting with Sunrise Children's Services and Alachua County Early Learning Centers
  - Purpose: A few Early Learning centers are interested in piloting by creating classrooms and business models that focus on serving children with cognitive and developmental disabilities. This center located in Hillsborough County has a model and framework for it.
- Next steps and meetings:
  - Schedule a meeting for the planning leaders and larger workgroup
  - Wrap up roadmap recommendations for early intervention and special needs in 1 to 2 additional meetings
  - Determine next steps
- **Community Conversation on Childcare**

In partnership with the Greater Gainesville Chamber of Commerce and the Business and Leadership Institute for Early Learning, the Alachua County Community Conversation Investing in Infrastructure: The Child Care Economy was held on October 9<sup>th</sup>. The meeting explored solutions to one of our region's most pressing issues:

- Childcare access, affordability, and quality
- Working families need support to thrive
- Childcare is a workforce and economic development

Next steps include:

- Hosting a conversation twice a fiscal year
- Follow-up breakout sessions based on panel discussion
- Establish a local Early Learning Impact Initiative

### **Upcoming Dates**

Florida's All In For Early Learning Day, January 26 (statewide)

- Florida's All in for Early Learning Day is held each year on the fourth Monday in January, and shines a spotlight on children, families, and the early learning field. Together, we can build awareness and inspire action across our state.

### **Programmatic Impact:**

Goal 1- Children and youth are healthy and have nurturing caregivers and relationships.

Goal 2- Children and youth can learn what they need to be successful.

### **Fiscal Impact:**

N/A

### **Recommendation:**

Receive the information