



Item:

Early Childhood Learning Collaborative Update

Requested Action:

The Board is asked to receive this update.

Update:

This is an update of the activities of the Early Childhood Learning Collaborative and the workgroups:

Workgroups:

Thrive Parents

- Workgroup Leaders- Yolanda Hagley, Lisa Heath, and Stacey Williams.
- Next Workgroup Planning – February 2, 2026
- Next Workgroup Meeting- To Be Scheduled

In January, the workgroup leaders convened in person to determine next steps and clarify the intended outcomes of the workgroup. During this meeting, they reviewed a project proposal and agreed to prioritize launching a caregiver survey. The survey is designed to assess community needs, gauge interest in participating in a parent group, and gather feedback on the proposed project.

In addition, the leaders plan to host focus groups by partnering with community organizations that work directly with caregivers. These focus groups will also serve as workgroup meetings. The next meeting is scheduled for February 2, with the goal of launching the survey at that time. Several key workgroup deliverables have already been completed, including the caregiver application, survey instrument, and a draft of the proposed project.

Early Learning Educator Workforce and Supports

- Workgroup Leaders- Elizabeth Woods, Heather Dole, and Arlene Lambert
- Next Workgroup Planning- January 30, 2026
- Next Workgroup Meeting- To Be Scheduled

This workgroup has experienced leadership transitions and requires time to align on a new shared direction. At the next meeting, members will establish a meeting cadence and timeline, develop a guiding framework, and create an agenda for subsequent sessions.

System Coordination and Resources

- Workgroup Leaders- Bonnie Bowman, Terri Robinson, and Dorothy Thomas.
- Next Workgroup Planning – February 11, 2026

- Next Workgroup Meeting- February 17, 2026 and March 3, 2026

Workgroup leaders met with the Anita Zucker Center on January 13 to discuss early intervention and support services for children ages 0–5 with special needs in early learning centers and family home-based settings. The conversation focused on embedded instruction, access to related services such as occupational and physical therapy (OT/PT), and strategies for strengthening teacher capacity. The Anita Zucker Center shared research on embedded instruction and examples of successful implementation across multiple settings. Participants also examined challenges related to therapy access, policy changes impacting service delivery, and opportunities for collaboration among schools, early learning coalitions, and other providers.

On January 14, workgroup leaders reconvened to identify next steps. Discussions included budget considerations for hiring an occupational therapist and the need to develop a clear service pathway for early childhood education, incorporating assessment and coaching components. The group agreed to develop a written framework, with a meeting scheduled for February 17 to gather subject matter expert input and a follow-up session on March 3 to share progress with the full workgroup.

An update was shared with the broader workgroup and subject matter experts, along with a link to register for both upcoming meetings.

Alachua Business and Leadership Institute (BLI)

Community Conversation

The next community conversation is tentatively scheduled for March 11. This meeting will convene workgroup leaders to share updates, discuss progress on their ongoing work, and align on next steps.

Business and Leadership Institute (BLI) Alumni Chapter Learn and Lunch Series

This year, BLI Alumni launched a four-part Learn and Lunch Series in partnership with the Greater Gainesville Chamber of Commerce. Alumni created this local opportunity to continue learning from one another and to strengthen local peer support after completing the Master Class Series and Accreditation Academy. Each Learn and Lunch features a three-hour skills-building workshop followed by a networking lunch with local stakeholders.

The first Learn and Lunch is scheduled for February 21, 2026. Madeleine Thakur, President of the Children’s Movement of Florida, has been invited to provide an overview of current legislative initiatives and their progress through the Florida legislative session.

Session 1 Learning Objectives:

1. Increase understanding of legislative initiatives currently moving through the Florida legislative session and their potential impact on childcare businesses.
2. Strengthen organizational systems and team-based approaches for monitoring, documenting, and implementing regulatory changes to maintain ongoing compliance.
3. Identify opportunities to adapt programming and service hours to better align with parent and workforce needs.
4. Examine key factors contributing to enrollment fluctuations in center-based and family home-based childcare programs.

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