

The Early Learning Coalition  
of Pasco and Hernando  
Counties, Inc.

Annual Report  
2007-2008



## Mission Statement

Provide leadership for  
quality children's services.



## Vision Statement

Prepare children in our communities  
to enter and succeed in school.

## Board of Directors

**Lisa Hammond, Chair**  
*Hernando, Private Sector*

**James Cook, Vice Chair**  
*Pasco, Private Sector*

**Susan Arnett**  
*Pasco United Way*

**Sister Roberta Bailey**  
*Pasco, Faith Based Provider*

**Curt Bromund**  
*Childhood Development Services, Inc.*

**Elizabeth Callaghan**  
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*Pasco-Hernando Community College*

**Sonya Jackson**  
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**Steven N. Kanakis, Psy.D.**  
*Pasco, Private Sector*

**Joe Mascaro**  
*Regional Workforce Board*

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*Pasco, Private Sector*

**Nicole Miller**  
*Hernando, Private Sector*

**Lydia Pinkowski**  
*Hernando, Disabilities and Special Health Care Needs*

**Jean Rags**  
*Hernando County Commission Appointee*

**Beth Rawls**  
*Pasco Head Start*

**Mary Beth Wehnes**  
*Department of Children and Families - Licensing*

**Patricia Wisman**  
*Department of Children and Families*







## Letter from the Board Chair



The Early Learning Coalition of Pasco and Hernando Counties is proud of a remarkable year that began in search of a new executive, and closed with a strong leader and unified board. With clear and definitive focus on children, we recruited a leader with a wealth of education experience, a voice for children, and consummate consensus building skills.

Our Board of Directors has rallied around our staff, developed a long term strategic plan, and proudly speaks with one voice. Through the skills of our Executive Director we have a lean and purpose driven organization that is highly responsive to the needs of children.

Our 4,401 children served in School Readiness was accomplished through tight fiscal management and adhering to the core of our mission “Children First.” Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten achieved higher attendance than preceding years with 4,550 children enrolled. Furthermore, we increased our average readiness rate, and again exceeded the State average.

One of our signature programs, PEEP (Pre-school Early Education Program), which meets the needs of children birth through five years old through Inclusion Services, is now in its fifth year. This is a hallmark quality initiative that provides mental health and behavior management services to children in need. By expanding the program throughout our communities, we more than tripled the number of children served to 174. Healthy children, in mind, spirit, and body, are essential to successful learning.

A new endeavor for the Coalition this year is our Jump Into Early Learning series. Modeled after Operation Backpack, we distributed 780 pre-school backpacks with assorted school supplies. At each of the four events, we were knee deep in children and shoulder to shoulder with dozens of parents, providers, and community members. The rooms were packed with people, and the atmospheres electric with enthusiasm. The giveaway’s, announced in both English and Spanish, were eagerly accepted with gratitude. We were also fortunate to have various dignitaries attend these events, from AWI Director Monesia T. Brown, to State Representative Wil Weatherford, and both Pasco and Hernando County Commissioners.

Our Resource Van clocked thousands of miles attending 18 community events, and making more than 600 provider visits. The van also gave away more than 2,500 books to our littlest children.

Preschools are the incubators from which emerge our current and future students, employees, parents and citizens. The quality of experience they receive in these early, formative years will set the stage for their future successes. It is our job to ensure that each child within our collective communities receives services of the highest quality from trained, compassionate and loving professionals.

The Early Learning Coalition of Pasco and Hernando Counties embraces the stewardship bestowed upon us to ensure that all of our small children are elevated to a successful level and grow to carry the torch for those yet to be born.

*Lisa M. Hammond*

Board Chair

“ . . . we recruited a leader with a wealth of education experience, a voice for children, and consummate consensus building skills.”

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## Coalition Highlights



The staff of the Early Learning Coalition of Pasco and Hernando Counties, Inc. is pleased to present our 2007-2008 Annual Report, outlining our accomplishments during this past year.

Coalition staff works hard to provide a seamless system of services to better prepare children for entry into kindergarten. We provide information, resources, and referrals to assist parents in locating quality child care. Coalition Provider Specialists work directly with nearly four hundred Pasco and Hernando providers of School Readiness and Voluntary Pre-kindergarten services, offering information and expertise as well as program review and recommendations.

Coalition Inclusion Specialists ensure that providers have the tools and talents needed to effectively deal with children presenting developmental challenges, while offering both on-site technical assistance and professional development activities for staff.

The Coalition's Mobile Outreach Specialist visits providers daily, loaning thousands of desirable materials to Providers, while encouraging program enrollment through active participation in dozens of community events.

The Coalition is committed to an ongoing system of professional development and program improvement. Courses, scholarships and provider improvement incentives are but some of the many opportunities offered to our childcare providers during the past year. We focus on children as well as their parents and families. In this way, the Coalition significantly contributes to communities where all children are prepared for school success.

We believe that your review of the statistics and narratives contained within this Annual Report will lead you to the same conclusion – significant progress is being made! We express our sincere appreciation to our volunteer Board of Directors. They freely commit their time and expertise towards building communities which embrace learning. Towards this end, our dedicated and caring staff is oriented. Our successes derive from their many efforts and achievements.

While we look back on a year of progress, we look forward to another year of opportunity.

*James J. Farrelly*

Executive Director

“The coalition is committed to an ongoing system of professional development and program improvement.”

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“Once again your Inclusion Team is a shining beacon.”

Stephen C. Martaus, M.S.  
Executive Director  
Early Childhood Council, Tampa

## Outcomes and Success

- VPK programs continued to be successful in their second year of operation. Figures for the 2006-2007 year indicated that Volunteer Pre-kindergarten providers in Pasco and Hernando Counties received an average readiness rate in excess of the state average.
- Provider meetings were organized and presented by the Coalition with a primary focus on professional and business development.
- The Coalition made significant staff changes and additions, resulting in a more effective means to provide early childhood services within our communities.
- INCLUSION of all eligible and registered children, regardless of special need, has become a major focus of Coalition efforts with Providers, through the professional services of trained and experienced Coalition Inclusion Specialists.
- Dramatic increase in Provider reliance on the Coalition’s Mobile Outreach Resource Van. The Outreach van visits Providers daily, attends provider meetings, community events, and acts as a mobile resource library for providers.

## Coalition Staff

### Administrative Staff

- James J. Farrelly  
*Executive Director*
- Pattie Eacobacci  
*Office Manager*
- Nicole Flechas  
*Quality Manager*
- Maryrose Wersan  
*Fiscal Manager*
- Angela Westmoreland  
*Administrative Assistant*

### Program Staff

- Betsy Kier  
*Program and Contracts Manager*
- Debbie Thomas  
*Early Learning Specialist*
- LuAnn LaCava  
*Provider Specialist (Readiness)*
- Ljubica Sevic  
*Provider Specialist (Readiness)*
- Connie Porter  
*VPK Specialist II*
- Marie Grace  
*VPK Specialist II*
- Anne McHugh  
*Inclusion Specialist*
- Jack Karuso  
*Inclusion Specialist*
- Shannon Dewey  
*Mobile Outreach Specialist*



# Programs

## Achievements and Outcomes

### Pasco

A total of 3,230 unduplicated School Readiness children in Pasco County were in care during the 2007-2008 year, representing an increase of 71 children over 2006-2007 unduplicated enrollment. There were 324 children on the School Readiness waiting list as of June 30, 2008. A total of 3,400 Pasco County children were enrolled in 2007-2008 VPK programs (School Year and summer combined), representing an increase of 889 children over 2006-2007 VPK program enrollments.

### Hernando

A total of 1,171 unduplicated School Readiness children in Hernando County were in care during the 2007-2008 year, representing a decrease of 126 children from 2006-2007 unduplicated enrollment. There were 356 children on the School Readiness waiting list as of June 30, 2008. A total of 1,150 Hernando County children were enrolled in 2007-2008 VPK programs (School Year and summer combined), representing an increase of 135 children over 2006-2007 VPK program enrollments.

## School Readiness

The School Readiness program provides subsidized child care for working poor families. This program fuels the economy of our community by allowing parents to afford safe and reliable child care. Eligible families are assessed a fee on a sliding fee scale according to income. Without help in paying for child care costs, parents often have no choice but to quit their jobs, as the full costs of child care can consume as much as 60% of salaries and wages.

The children in school readiness programs are assisted through screenings, assessment and developmentally appropriate early learning programs to ensure they are prepared for school. Our focus is serving children from birth to age five and school age children with younger siblings.

## School Readiness Results

### Pasco

#### ECHOS Results

- 4,546 children screened; 92.37% consistently demonstrating/emerging-progressing; 7.63% not yet demonstrating.

#### DIBELS Letter Naming Fluency

- 4,539 children screened; 70.94% above average/low risk; 29.06% moderate risk/high risk.

#### DIBELS Initial Sound

- 4,492 children screened; 67.97% above average/low risk; 32.03% moderate risk/high risk.

### Hernando

#### ECHOS Results

- 1,504 children screened; 92.49% consistently demonstrating/emerging-progressing; 7.51% not yet demonstrating.

#### DIBELS Letter Naming Fluency

- 1,519 children screened; 77.02% above average/low risk; 22.98% moderate risk/high risk.

#### DIBELS Initial Sound

- 1,518 children screened; 65.42% above average/low risk; 34.58% moderate risk/high risk.

“... full costs of child care can consume as much as 60% of salaries and wages.”







## **Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten**

Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten is a program passed and funded by the Florida Legislature providing 540 hours of free, school-year pre-kindergarten services for children who are four years old on or before September 1 of the current school year. As an alternative, there is a shorter (300 hours), but more intense program offered during the summer. This program, free to parents regardless of income, is offered at participating licensed private child care centers, accredited faith based centers, many public school and Head Start sites, as well as licensed family child care homes. The goal of the program is to provide quality pre-kindergarten experiences for young children such as self-management and emergent literacy skills, to assist them in becoming ready for kindergarten. Providers are the key to the success of the VPK program and we consistently offer trainings and technical assistance to our early learning educators to ensure our children receive the best possible start on their future.

## **Quality Initiatives**

Efforts to improve the quality of services available to young children and their families are a primary concern. The Coalition sets aside a portion of the funding received to target these issues. The Coalition employs two full time Inclusion Specialists.

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## **Program Issue and Response**

### **Program Issue**

Warm Line calls were noted as describing similar provider challenges, often behavioral in nature, concerning different children.

### **Coalition Response**

Inclusion staff focused intervention efforts on providers and classroom staff, rather than on individual children. Teachers were instructed in effective intervention strategies for the referred child, which could be useful with others as well. Children who were not responsive to such initial strategies were referred for in-depth evaluation and intervention through the Coalition and its contracted consultants.

## **Single Point of Entry/ Resource and Referral**

Families are able to apply for VPK and School readiness services through the single point of entry system online in Pasco and Hernando Counties. After a family is identified as being eligible to receive subsidized child care, they are placed on a Unified Waiting List according to Coalition priority. Families are contacted and offered subsidized child care based on eligibility and availability of funding.

Child Care Resource and Referral is a part of the statewide Child Care Resource and Referral Network funded by the Agency for Workforce Innovation/Office of Early Learning. This is a free service to help parents, regardless of income, in locating quality child care services close to home or work. Resource and Referral also assists potential providers with information they need to become a provider. Through the CCR&R database, families are given the full range of options for their child care selection.





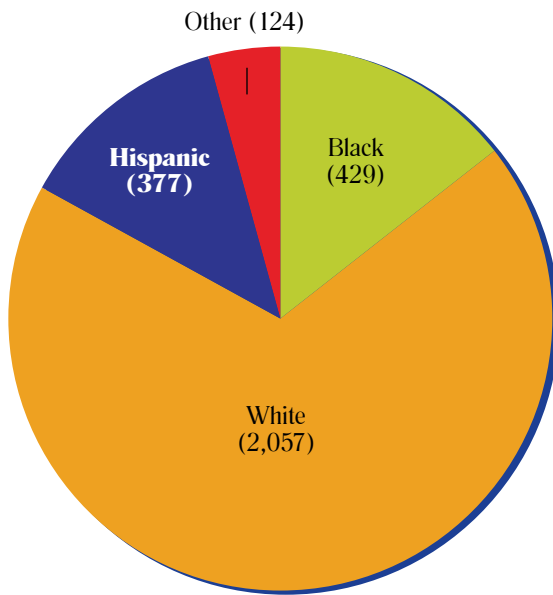
“Between the programs you’ve made available and your staff, I have been able to help more children, therefore making my job much easier.”

*Laura Wright  
VPK Teacher, Bright Beginnings  
Spring Hill*

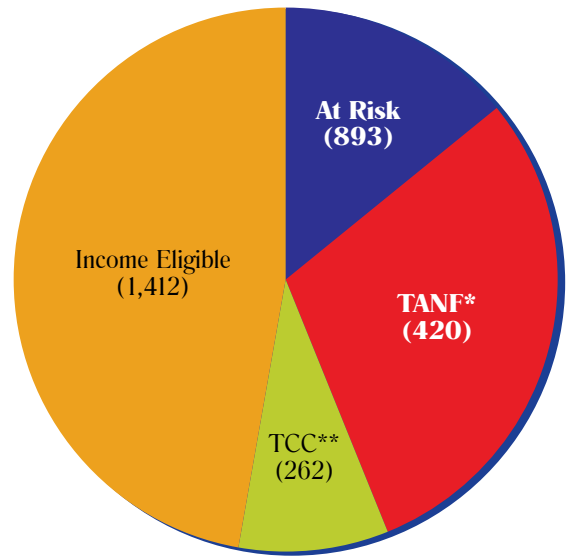
# Demographics: School Readiness

## Pasco County (2,987 Children Served)

**Ethnicity**

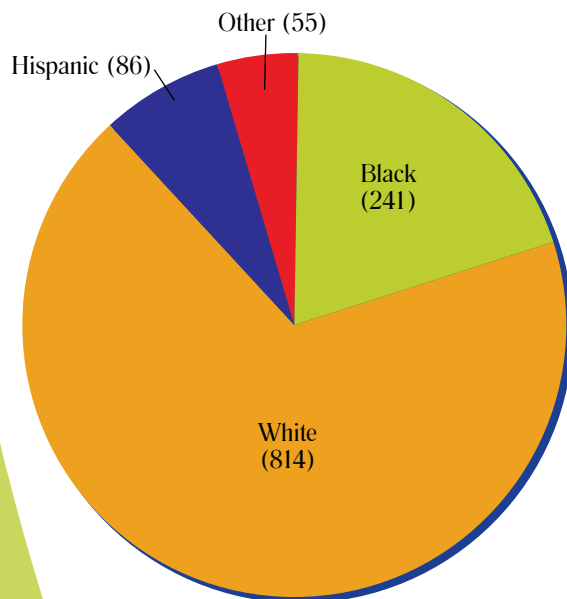


**Children Served**

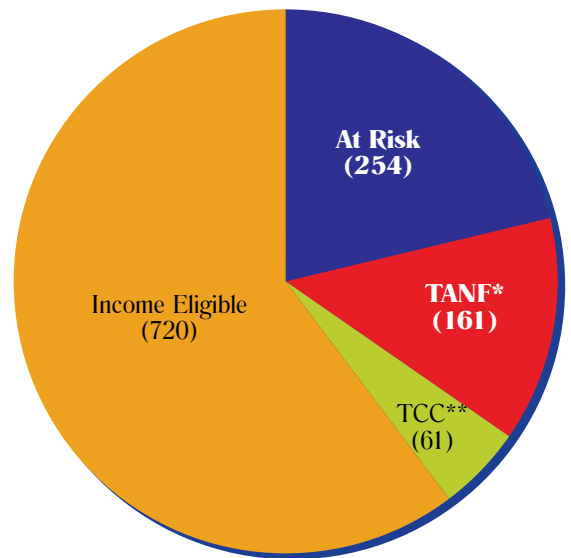


## Hernando County (1,196 Children Served)

**Ethnicity**



**Children Served**



\* Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)

\*\* Transitional Child Care (TCC)





“I would like to express my most sincere and deepest gratitude for the opportunity of the Florida Childcare Professional Credential (CDA) Quality Care Grant made available to me. I love what I do and I want to keep making a difference in children’s lives.”

*Digna L. Mascorro*

## Future Initiatives

The Coalition’s Strategic Plan (2008-2013) calls for achievement of the following:

- Create a **Foundation** to offer additional **community support**
- Develop an effective Plan of Action for **Community Outreach**
- Provide incentive-based **Quality funding for Providers**
- Support a **Provider Rate Increase**
- Establish a **financial base of unrestricted funds**
- Conclude a longitudinal study of **children’s progress**
- Develop a system for **immediate name recognition** for the Coalition
- **Increase** the number of **children served**
- **Maintain** and continuously **improve** the cadre of high **quality** child care **providers**
- **Assure availability** of subsidized child care services to all qualified families, **without waiting list**

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“I would like to thank [the coalition] for giving my staff members the opportunity to get their CDA’s. This would not have been possible without you helping them. This has been something that these ladies have wanted to achieve for a long time.”

*Sue Smith  
Sea of Learning Pre-School  
New Port Richey*

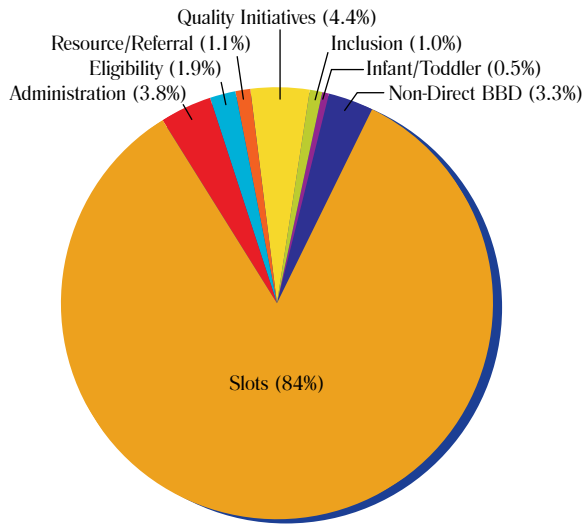




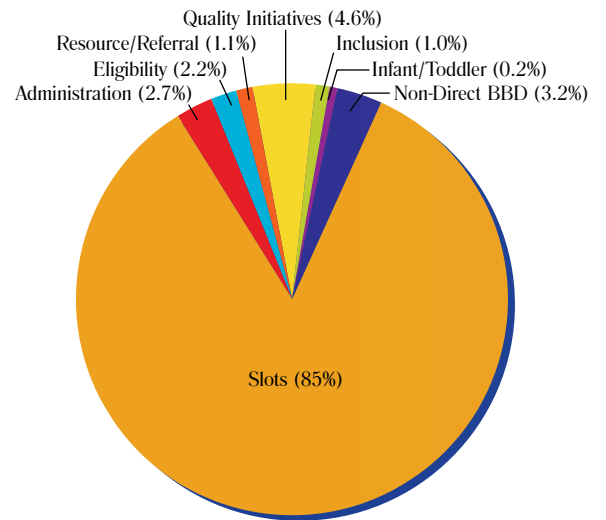
# Fiscal Information

## School Readiness

**Grant Allocation**

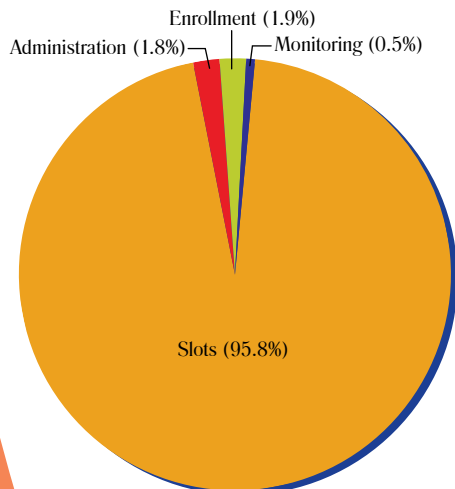


**Actual Spending**

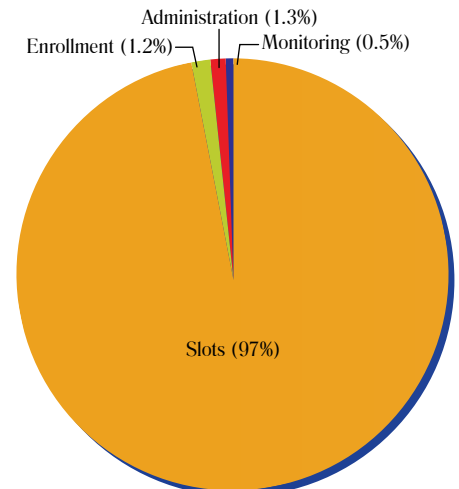


## Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten

**Grant Allocation**



**Actual Spending**



“Thank you so much for all your hard work and follow through. You’re a big help to our center.”

Sharon Cimato and Lisa Harris  
Lil Campers Academy  
Wesley Chapel



“I thank all who made it possible for not only me, but all of the other early childhood educators who are benefiting from this opportunity (attained CDA credentials). This class has allowed me to explore unlimited possibilities for my home daycare and toward my future goals of opening a childcare facility. I have incorporated many of the skills that I have learned through this class to enhance the learning experience of the children in my care. I appreciate all that CDA does to help providers provide quality care.”

*Carlotta Mathis  
Mathis Family Daycare Home  
Zephyrhills*

### School Readiness Allocation and Spending

Category	Amount Allocated	Actual
■ Administration	\$580,604	\$393,180
■ Eligibility	\$290,558	\$323,906
■ Resource/Referral	\$174,158	\$160,749
■ Quality Initiatives	\$672,737	\$687,936
■ Inclusion	\$139,135	\$148,138
■ Infant/Toddler	\$ 86,035	\$103,829
■ Non-Direct BBD	\$502,215	\$476,961
■ Slots	\$12,705,777	\$12,530,683
Total	\$15,151,219	\$14,825,382

### Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten Allocation and Spending

Category	Amount Allocated	Actual
■ Administration	\$211,320	\$138,943
■ Enrollment	\$225,483	\$127,266
■ Monitoring	\$63,351	\$49,065
■ Slots	\$11,076,850	\$10,470,214
Total	\$11,577,004	\$10,785,488



*Sponsored by the Agency for  
Workforce Innovation,  
Office of Early Learning*





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[www.phelc.org](http://www.phelc.org)