



Early Learning Coalition of Florida's Heartland, Inc. 2008-2009 Annual Report

Mission Statement:

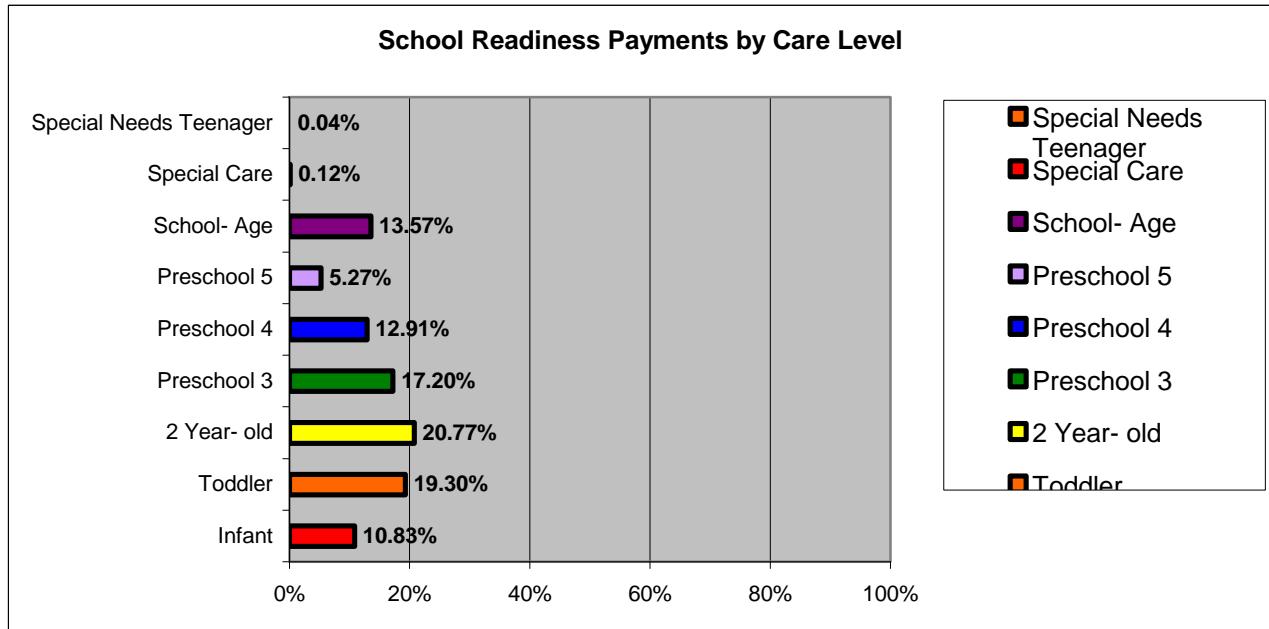
The mission of the Early Learning Coalition of Florida's Heartland, Inc. is to support families and children in accessing high quality early care and education services via School Readiness and Voluntary Pre-kindergarten programs. The ELCFH also serves as a point of access to resources and referrals for health care and family support services.

Data Summary: The following information is based on data collected from July 1, 2008-June 30, 2009.

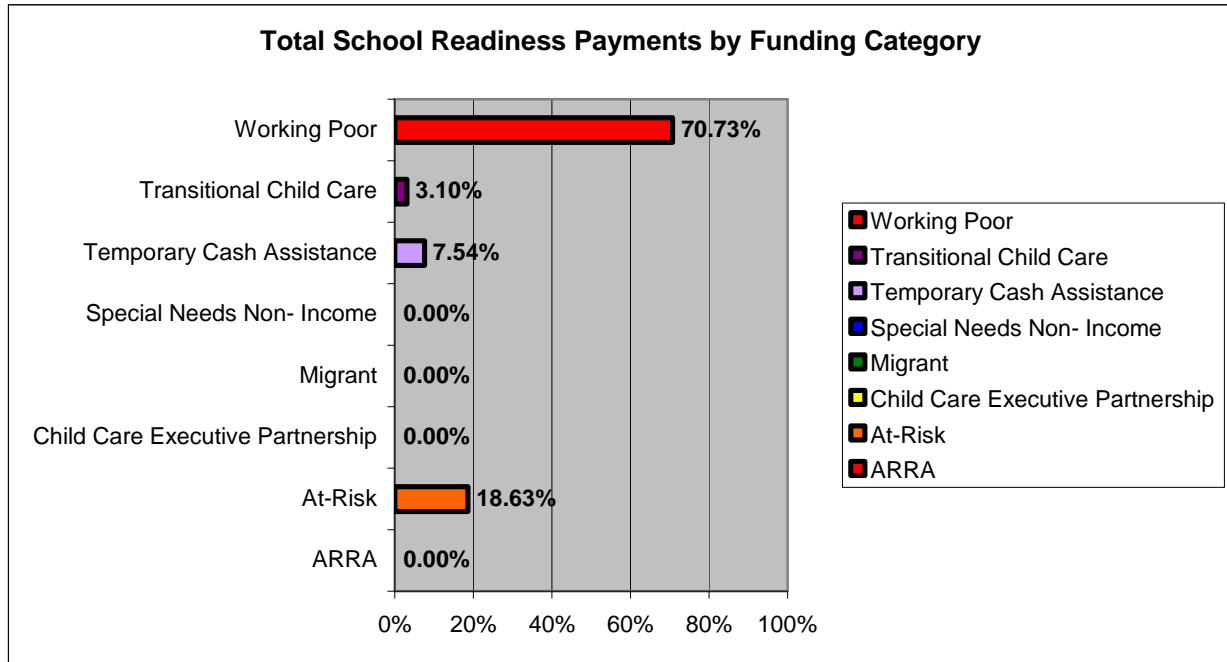
Number of unduplicated School Readiness (SR) children and families:

SR Children	SR Families
3077	1896

School Readiness: Percentage of total payments (including match) by care level:



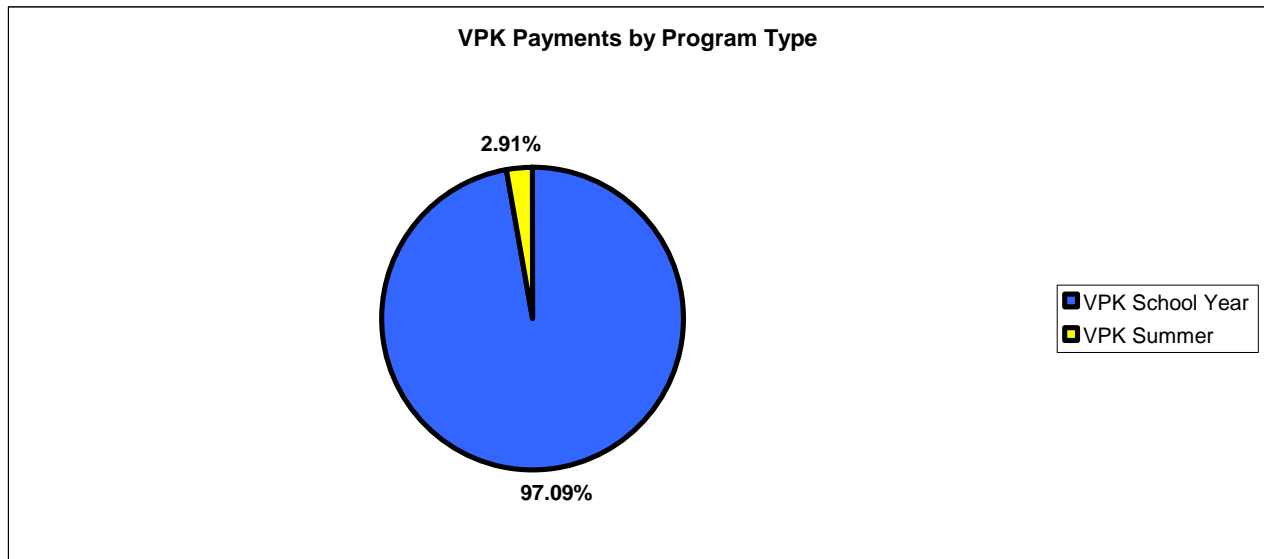
School Readiness: Percentage of total payments (including match) by funding category:



Number of unduplicated Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) Education children and families:

VPK Children	VPK Families
1988	1958

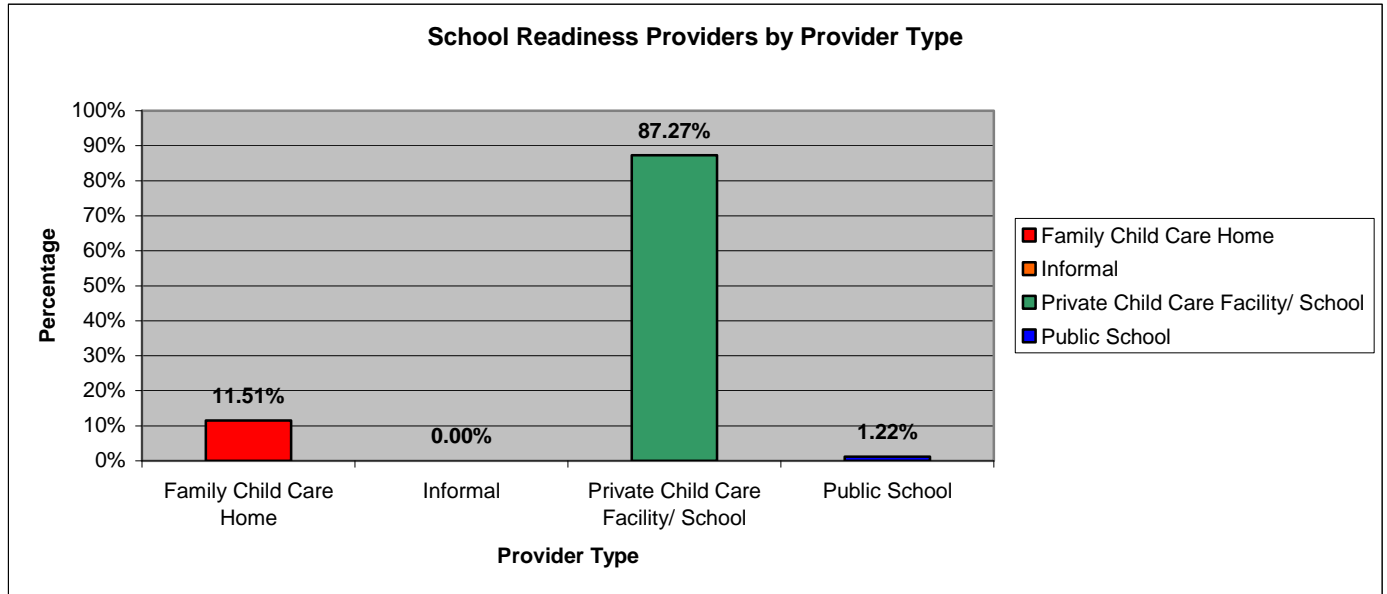
Total percentage of VPK payments by program type:



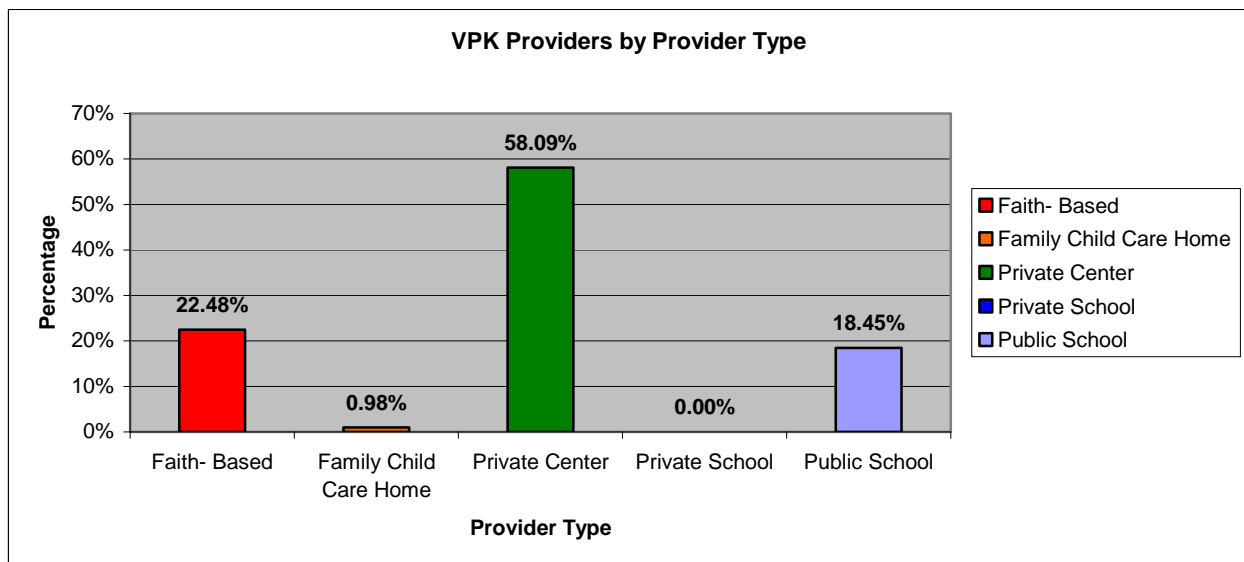
Total number of providers that participate in the coalition’s early learning programs:

School Readiness Providers	Voluntary Prekindergarten Education Providers
189	94

Participating School Readiness providers by provider type:



Participating VPK providers by provider type:



Service Delivery Summary:

In addition to the School Readiness and Voluntary Pre-kindergarten services, the ELCFH received funding from the following funders to support local programs:

DeSoto County Nutrition Initiative: Funds received from Sweetbay Supports focused on the provision of nutrition education to fifteen child care classrooms utilizing the “Color Me Healthy” curriculum.

HIPPY (Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters): The DeSoto HIPPY Program, funded by the University of South Florida, provided in home educational services to approximately 50 families this year. Of these, 33 families completed 20 or more weekly activity packets and 21 successfully completed all 30 packets. Parents also participated in six monthly educational meetings. Topics included Car Seat Safety, Child Abuse Prevention and Shaken Baby Syndrome, Household Safety Training, Medicaid & Medicare Eligibility, Infant & Toddler Development, and Developmentally Appropriate Activities for the Home. An average of 15 families attended each meeting and received books for their at-home literacy library.

DeSoto HIPPY Program implemented a pilot project that screened approximately 16 children enrolled in the HIPPY three year old program using the Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ). Results of the screening revealed that 14 of the children were typically developing and two needed further evaluation. Community referrals were made for the two families and beginning in August, these families are scheduled to receive additional support through the Florida Diagnostic and Learning Resources System (FDLRS).

The Annual Promotion Ceremony was held in June with 34 families in attendance. Eleven families graduated from the HIPPY five year old program and successfully completed a minimum of two years in the HIPPY program. Six families were honored with Perfect Attendance Awards.

Highlands County Nutrition Initiative: Funds received from the Highlands Hospital District Grant focused on the provision of children’s health services in Highlands County. These services included child developmental assessments, hearing and vision screenings and BMI checks. During FY 08-09 a nutrition component using the *Food, Fun, Fitness* Nutrition Program for birth to three years old was introduced. The curriculum and training was disseminated to 64 teachers. A parent component was also introduced during FY 08-09 providing education to 84 parents. General nutrition classes were offered to the community with 39 total participants.

Reading Is Fundamental (RIF): The RIF grant encourages reading by giving children the opportunity to choose a book to take home from a selection of good quality children’s literature. 714 children served by 10 providers in Highlands County directly benefited from this program.

Quality Activity Summary:

Activity	Narrative
<p>What opportunities are offered by the Coalition for comprehensive consumer education?</p>	<p>Client Services Specialists are blended positions that provide client eligibility services and Child Care Resource and Referral Services. Family needs assessments are offered in the face to face appointment and materials and contacts are provided as needed. The needs assessment provides information on housing, WIC, early intervention services, assistance with utilities, KidCare and other community agencies that can support families. The needs assessment is also offered at the time of redetermination or as needed via phone/email. Customized Child Care Resource and Referral information is provided when requested, either in person, by phone, fax, email or regular mail to families when requested. Resource and Referral services were administered to 2,243 inquiries. There has been a decrease in Resource and Referral calls due to parents using the ELCFH website in conjunction with the NACCRRRA and DCF websites. The ELCFH’s website family section provides links and current information that support parents in making educated decisions.</p>
<p>Provide a list of grants or loans to providers to assist in meeting State and local standards.</p>	<p>The ELCFH facilitated mini-grants with 121 contracted School Readiness Providers during FY 08-09. The purpose of the grants was to give providers needed funds for materials and equipment to enhance the early education environment as indicated on the Environment Rating Scale.</p> <p>Family Child Care Home Start-Up Mini Grants assisted five (5) new family child care homes in meeting the cost of opening their businesses. These grant dollars were awarded through an application process followed by a site visit. Grant dollars were used to cover start-up costs such as background screenings, fire extinguishers, and fencing.</p> <p>Scholarship reimbursements were also accessed by providers for tuition or conference registration. Three family child care providers were reimbursed for a state conference registration. Three providers from child care centers were reimbursed for either FCCPC classes or college classes.</p>

<p>Describe the process for monitoring compliance with licensing and regulatory requirements.</p>	<p>In FY 08-09, 181 providers signed the School Readiness Provider Contract with the ELCFH to provide education and care to eligible families.</p> <p>All contracted school readiness providers within the four county service area had a contract monitor visit. Contracted providers outside of the four county area are monitored by their respective Early Learning Coalition. The monitoring tool used during FY 08-09 focused directly on the ELCFH provider contract. The four core areas were Quality Benchmarks, Assessment and Screening, Family Involvement & Cultural Continuity, and Provider Responsibility. Out of the 172 programs monitored, 169 programs were in compliance with all monitor items.</p> <p>All licensed-exempt providers in the ELCFH service area counties have annual health and safety checks as part of the contract monitor. All inspections were satisfactory.</p> <p>The Environmental Rating Scale (ERS) is conducted annually on all contracted school readiness programs. If expected outcomes are not achieved, an improvement plan is written, and a second recheck visit is made to these sites. Scores can range from 1.0 to 7.0 and all providers are expected to demonstrate improvement each year. ERS baseline scores were established for all contracted sites throughout the ELCFH. The scores ranged from 2.38 to 7 which demonstrated maintenance to general improvement throughout the four counties. Each contracted provider has agreed to diligently work towards establishing a minimum score of 5.0.</p> <p>A total of 74 private providers and two (2) school districts within the four (4) counties delivered the 540 hour school year VPK program. 19 private providers and all four (4) school districts delivered the 300 hour summer 2008 VPK program. VPK Monitors were completed in November, 2008 on 100% of the contracted VPK programs, less the school district sites. Letters of commendation for full compliance were sent to 86% of the VPK programs; with follow up letters to the remaining VPK providers that brought them to full compliance within 30 business days of the on-site monitor.</p>
<p>Provide a list of available professional</p>	<p>The ELCFH offered numerous in-service trainings including First Aid and CPR courses and State Mandated classes. Scholarships were granted to teachers to attend conferences and pursue higher education degrees. The</p>

<p>development opportunities that the coalition offers, including training, education, and technical assistance</p>	<p>highlights of the scheduled trainings offered by staff and presenters were the <i>Beyond Centers & Circle Time</i>, <i>Beyond Differences and Diagnoses</i>, LAP and E-LAP training, Blood Born Pathogens, Accreditation: Side by Side Comparison, Child Behavior series workshops, The Inclusive Classroom, Color Me Healthy, Learning Spaces for Infants and Toddlers and Henry the Hand (hand washing & health). CEU's were offered to the providers when they attended trainings that were over five hours. The first annual ELCFH "Celebrate Early Learning" conference brought a wide array of trainers to the ELCFH service area for the benefit of providers.</p> <p>The FCCPC program was offered through local educational institutions during the FY 2008-09. The ELCFH will support efforts of those seeking their FCCPC credentials through partnering institutions by providing scholarship reimbursements for successful completion of each segment of the programs. One person submitted paperwork for part I and part II of the FCCPC program. One program reported four graduates in June of 2009 and three more will graduate as of October 2009.</p> <p>ELCFH quality staff developed a mentoring program in which providers can voluntarily choose to participate. During this first year of the mentoring program quality staff provided personalized on-site technical assistance, coaching, modeling in the classroom and training for thirteen (13) providers.</p> <p>The Accreditation Program is highly regarded in the service area. Six providers achieved accreditation in FY 08-09 with the support from the ELCFH Accreditation Program. At the end of the fiscal year there were seven programs pending validator visits and an additional five providers were registered in the program and conducting self studies.</p>
<p>Describe initiatives by the coalition to improve salaries and other compensation for child care providers.</p>	<p>The ELCFH did not undertake this activity during FY 08-09.</p>

<p>Describe activities to support a Quality Rating System.</p>	<p>The ELCFH did not undertake this activity during FY 08-09.</p>
<p>Provide information on activities in support of early language, literacy, pre-reading, and early math concepts development.</p>	<p><i>ELCFH FY 08-09 Literacy Programs</i> Literacy programs were offered in all four counties:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Cradling Literacy</u> consisted of twelve (12) two hour classes focusing on building teacher skills in the nurturing and development of early language skills. • <u>Start with the Arts</u> – consisted of a two hour workshop with four (4) on-site visits during which participants are expected to demonstrate use of the curriculum. • <u>Essentials to Literacy</u> – consisted of a 15 hour training that fostered language development, open and closed questions, how to support English language learners, and how to create environments that support literacy. The training consisted of 12.5 hours of instruction and 2.5 hours of homework assignments for each class session for completion. • <u>Read, Move & Learn-</u> consisted of a three part series workshop which incorporated literacy with health, nutrition and movement. • <u>VPK Phonological Awareness</u> – consisted of training based on the child’s awareness of sounds and listening. • <u>VPK Emergent Literacy</u> – consisted of a 10 hour hands-on training that focused on developmentally appropriate literacy skills for children in VPK. <p><i>ELCFH FY 2008-09 Pre-Math Programs</i> Hands on pre-math trainings for providers included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Math in Minutes-</u> Focused on mathematical thinking which included information and hands-on activities in number sense, numbers and operations, patterns and serration, geometry, measurement, and spatial relationships. • <u>File Folder Games/ Parent Involvement</u> – Involved simple games that could be made with pictures found in magazines or other sources, using simple objects such as buttons, golf tees etc. • <u>Homemade Teaching Resources</u> – Recognized the variety of common objects that could be used to introduce and reinforce math

concepts.

- New VPK standards - Emphasized the curriculum areas of math and science.
- Count on Math – Explored the Early Learning Ladder (which is a continuum) of mathematics consisting of nine steps: 1) Free play, Exploration, Sensory Motor; 2) Matching; 3) Comparing; 4) Sorting; 5) Classifying; 6) Seriation; 7) Patterning; 8) Counting; 9) Simple Operation.

Charlotte County: Literacy Programs

- Start with the Arts - Fifteen (15) participants attended the initial two hour workshop with six (6) participants completing all the requirements including the four (4) on-site visits during which they were expected to demonstrate use of the curriculum.
- Cradling Literacy - Nine (9) participants committed to completing the classes that extended into FY 2009-10.
- VPK Emergent Literacy – Twenty –two (22) participants completed this 10 hour training.

Charlotte County: Pre-Math Programs

- New VPK Standards- During FY 2008-09 this workshop was offered eight times with a total of 168 participants.
- File Folder Games/Parent Involvement- Twelve (12) participants attended this five hour workshop.
- Math in Minutes – Twelve (12) participants completed all the requirements.

Desoto County: Literacy Programs

- Cradling Literacy - Eight (8) participants completed all the requirements.
- New VPK Standards- Twenty-six (26) participants completed this workshop focused on math and science.
- Integrating the Standards -VPK Phonological Awareness- Sixteen (16) participants completed all the requirements.

Desoto County: Pre-Math Programs

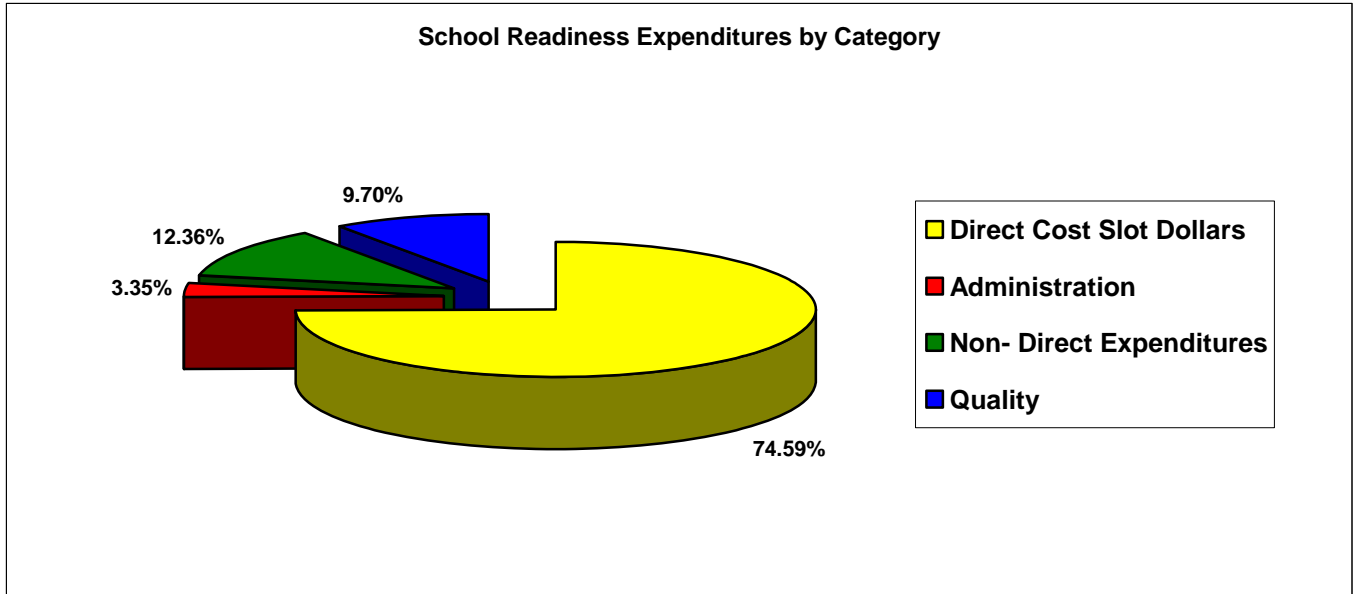
- New VPK Standards- Eleven (11) participants completed this two hour training that focused on math and science.
- Count on Math – Fifteen (15) participants completed the

	<p>requirements for this training.</p> <p><u>Hardee County: Literacy Programs</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Cradling Literacy</u> - Eight (8) participants completed all the requirements. • <u>Essentials to Literacy</u> – Nineteen (19) participants completed all the requirements for this workshop series. • <u>Emergent Literacy</u>- Sixteen (16) providers participated. <p><u>Hardee County: Pre-Math Programs</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Math in Minutes</u>– Six (6) participants completed all the requirements. • <u>New VPK Standards</u>- Two (2) trainings were provided; one training had thirteen (13) participants; the second had nineteen (19) participants. <p><u>Highlands County: Literacy Programs</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Read, Move & Learn</u> – Twenty-one (21) participants participated in this Workshop. • <u>Emergent Literacy</u>- Twenty-four (24) providers participated. <p><u>Highlands County: Pre-Math Programs</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Math in Minutes</u> – Nine (9) participants completed all the requirements. • <u>New VPK Standards</u> – This workshop was offered three different times with a total of thirty-eight (38) participants.
<p>What activities has the coalition implemented to promote inclusive child care?</p>	<p>The Inclusion Specialists across the four counties maintain the “warm line”, which providers can call for technical assistance in working with children with special needs. This past year the warm line received 1,291 calls from providers. The Inclusion Specialists also made on-site technical assistance visits to provider sites for further inclusion support.</p> <p>The ELCFH distributed 3273 Inclusion Brochures in the four county service area. These brochures provided parents and community members with important information about inclusion and the services offered by the ELCFH.</p>

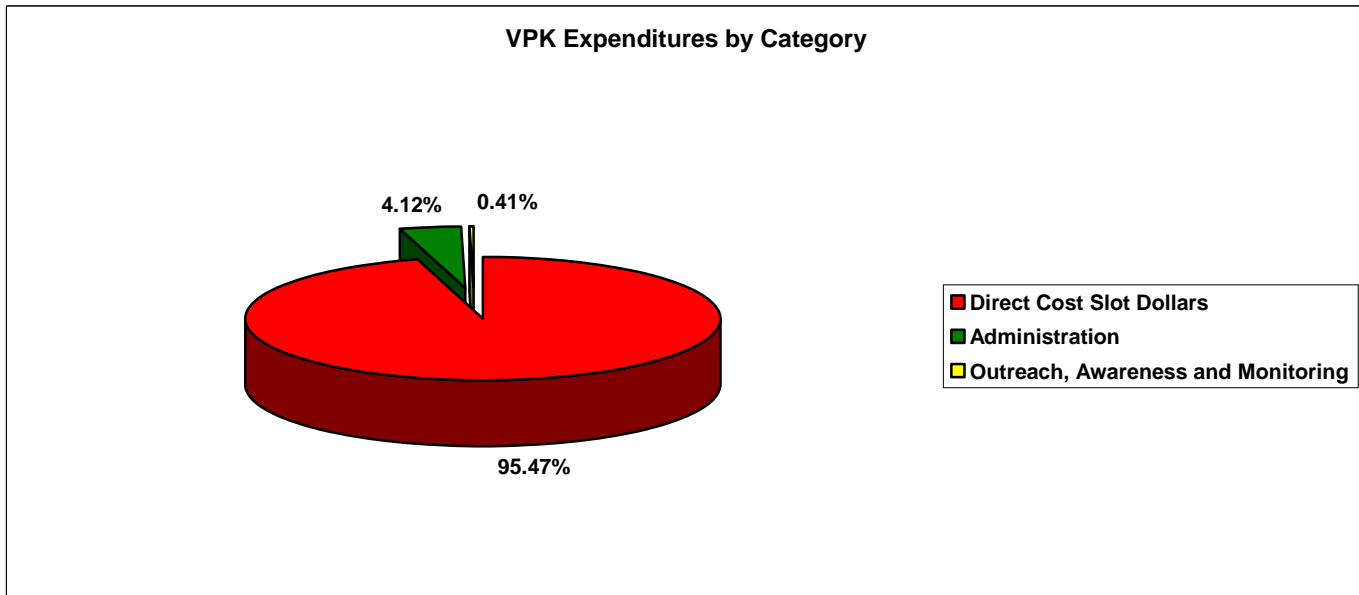
<p>How does the coalition conform to Healthy Child Care America and other health activities including those designed to promote the social and emotional development of children?</p>	<p><i>Developmental Screening and Assessment</i></p> <p>Ages and Stages Questionnaire Screenings are completed by the parent and reviewed by the child care provider. If the parent does not complete the screening as requested, then the child care program is responsible for completing it. 90% of the contracted programs were using the screening tool according to established procedures. Children were referred for further evaluation if needed based on the outcomes of the screenings.</p> <p>Children at contracted school readiness sites received free developmental assessments using the E-LAP or LAP-3. During FY 08-09 the ELCFH Quality staff provided trainings and on-site TA across the ELCFH service area for providers. On-site technical assistance was provided to ensure that providers understand how to access and use the E-LAP/ LAP-3 website as a tool to enhance their lesson planning. ELCFH Quality staff will continue to provide this type of technical assistance to ensure that providers are benefiting from all aspects of the LAP website. All four counties now have access to the E-LAP/ LAP-3 website.</p> <p>A total of 3,860 free vision and hearing screenings were conducted as well as height, weight and BMI measurements in all counties. All screening results were reviewed by child care providers and/or the children’s parents.</p> <p>The ELCFH Health Specialist is available to parents who have questions regarding the screening results. Early Learning Specialists provide trainings and on-site technical assistance to assist providers in focusing on social and emotional development of children.</p>
<p>Please describe other quality activities that increase parental choice, and improve the quality and availability of child care.</p>	<p>During FY 08-09, the ELCFH distributed magnets with the ELCFH logo and “It’s ok to play in VPK”. The magnets were widely distributed via community partners and providers as a VPK promotional item.</p> <p>The ELCFH sponsored a Community Event Sponsorship which provided funding support for the following community events and activities: Healthy Start Autumn Family Festival, South Florida Community College Provider Conferences, Highlands County Community Agency Pocket Guide, Healthy Start New Mom Tote Bag insert, Parent and Child therapy sessions, and Infant Simulators for community demonstrations.</p>

	<p>The ELCFH also distributed 2085 child care directories in the four county service area. The directories provided parents with important information regarding selection of quality child care.</p>
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Fiscal Summary: During the 2008- 2009 fiscal year the coalition’s total **School Readiness Program** operating budget was 9,103,356. Below is a breakout of expenditures by category.



During the 2008- 2009 fiscal year the coalition’s total **Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) Education Program** operating budget was \$4,464,082. Below is a breakout of expenditures by category.



Program Year Summary:

Three Family Success Stories.....

A mother of a three year old child was dealing with a very difficult separation and subsequent divorce. When she came in to the ELCFH for services for the first time in October, 2006 to apply for child care assistance, she was cleaning homes in order to earn money to support her child. Some time later, she was hired as a teacher for her daughter's child care center earning only \$6.80 per hour. She was excited about the opportunity to be close to her daughter. In December, 2007 she secured another position earning \$8.00 per hour and started receiving regular child support from her child's father. This was a very difficult transition but the client voiced that she was very thankful for the services provided by the ELCFH. In August 2008, the mother was able to terminate her services with ELCFH because her child was starting Kindergarten at a private church-based school and she received a scholarship from the school for her daughter to attend. The mother reported that she was very grateful for ELCFH services because she felt enabled to attain some monetary independence and support her child.

A single mother of two children was a recipient of School Readiness scholarship services since 2003. During this time, the mother maintained employment at the same location and attended school to earn her degree. In June, 2009, the mother called the ELCFH to terminate her services with ELCFH because she had graduated with a bachelor's degree and had a new job.

A mother contacted our office, expressing deep concern and a need for support due to a serious illness. She had two children, one of whom had developmental delays. She was not eligible for services, however, the ELCFH was able to secure child care services for the families through a community partner. Soon after, the mother passed away and the children were in the care of their grandparents. The family was now eligible for School Readiness scholarship services and the ELCFH was able to waive the parent fee. The family has expressed that thanks to the ELCFH and the community partnership, the children were able to have access to consistent child care which gave them a dependable support system as they went through the very difficult time of losing their mother.

And a Provider's Success Story.....

Alijandrina Pulgarin is the owner of Little Paradise FDCH. Ali understands the importance of floor time with children- talking with them and listening to them at their level. Ali realizes that communication is more than listening and speaking or even learning to read and write. She works to understand the emotions behind the communication and strives to help the children understand each other in the classroom.

Born in Texas, Ali moved to Florida as a child and finally settled in Arcadia. Ali was about seven

years old when she began working in the fields with her parents. She stated that she helped to harvest watermelons, strawberries, tomatoes, apples and oranges.

Ali married and had three children. Her career in child care began in Arcadia once her children were born- she worked for six months of the year in child care then she would pack up her children to travel north with her husband to work in the fields harvesting apples. Once her children entered high school Ali made the decision to no longer travel with her husband to work the apple crop because she noticed that her children were having trouble keeping up in school. She wanted to give them the stability that would enable them to be successful in school. Remembering the difficulties of her own school days she decided she wanted a better experience for her own children.

Staying in one place and working year round in child care she began to take advantage of training opportunities. Learning about child development and other best practices in quality child care improved her skills. Some time later Ali went to work for a new child care site in Arcadia that was contracted with the ELCFH. The Director of the site encouraged her to enroll in the CDAE class offered by the ELCFH. Ali earned her CDAE in 2004. Unfortunately, during this year tragedy struck her family when they lost their home to Hurricane Charlie. Ali did not give up on her dream and as a result the family eventually moved into a brand new house in which she dedicated the extra family room to her future Family Child Care.

Little Paradise FDCH has been open for two years now. Ali continues to enjoy going to trainings and learning all she can about providing quality child care and understanding child development. Some of the trainings Ali has successfully completed are: Beyond Center's & Circle Times, Beyond Cribs and Rattles, Heads Up Reading & more recently, Cradling Literacy.

An advocate for children and a role model for younger teachers, Ali encourages others to pursue furthering their knowledge and education. Perseverance and dedication to young children enabled Ali to achieve her dream of owning her own business & working with children in her home.