



“Small things done with  
**GREAT LOVE**   
will change the world.”

–Mother Teresa





## Message from the **PRESIDENT**

Like many organizations, early care and education programs were hit hard by the pandemic. Since February 2020, more than half of all child care programs were forced to close their doors and more than 126,000 child care jobs have been lost. Additionally, many early educators decided not to return to the field, which has led to staff shortages and long wait lists for children and families. Child care programs are struggling to stay afloat, and early educators are overworked yet continue to be underpaid.

Although the impact of COVID-19 on the early childhood field has been devastating, there may be a silver lining. The pandemic is a wake up call for the incredible need of the early care and education workforce and the realization that such care is essential for a stable economy. The needs of working families and early educators have been highlighted like never before. In response to these needs, legislative proposals at the state and federal levels have been drafted to ensure high-quality and affordable early learning programs for Florida's families. We are encouraged by the increased conversation about early learning, and look forward to working with state leaders to ensure that families can return to work.

We applaud Governor Ron DeSantis who once again acknowledged the importance of the T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® Scholarship Program and Help Me Grow® Florida. Both programs are administered by the Children's Forum. Budget appropriations of \$10 million for T.E.A.C.H. and \$1.8 million for Help Me Grow were approved for FY 21-22. T.E.A.C.H. is helping to improve the education, compensation, and retention of the child care workforce while Help Me Grow provides screenings, resources, and follow-up services to families with concerns about their child's health, development, behavior, and learning.

While we are excited that early care and education is viewed as a top priority among legislators, it is with a heavy heart that we share Dr. Wil Blechman passed away peacefully on September 15, 2021. Dr. Wil, as he was known to thousands, was a staunch advocate for young children and loved the work of the Forum and other organizations that focused on creating a better world for our children. He was a member of the Forum's Board of Directors for the past 20 years, serving as Vice Chair and Director Emeritus. As a man who gave of himself and cared for others, Dr. Wil never missed an opportunity to share his passion and mentor others. He was especially committed to educating legislators and business leaders on the science of brain development in children during the early years. While we mourn his loss, we continue to be inspired by his legacy. Our thoughts and prayers are with the Blechman family.

Mother Teresa once said: "Small things done with great love will change the world." Indeed, early learning and afterschool professionals do the work of angels. Their efforts today will be things we celebrate in the years to come. We will continue to support their endeavors to nurture, support, and prepare children for success in school and in life.

Of course, our work would not be possible without the unwavering support of our village. To our Board of Directors, funders, members, staff, and partners, thank you for believing in us and for investing in the future of Florida's children.

I invite you to join our village as we advocate for high-quality programs for children, affordable care for families, and livable wages for early educators. Together, we can change the landscape of early learning and afterschool programs.

Phyllis Kalifeh, Ed.D.  
President & CEO

## Florida Afterschool Network

The Florida Afterschool Network (FAN) is actively building brighter afterschool programs across the state in partnership with our stakeholders. Administered by the Children's Forum, FAN's mission is to expand high-quality extended learning programs offered to children and youth through local school districts, neighborhood and recreational departments, nonprofits, workforce boards, and more. By creating strong connections between statewide, regional and local partners, FAN has created a network equipped to respond to the changing needs of the afterschool community. FAN serves as a convener and advocate for policy, funding, and innovative initiatives to better support positive youth development and career and college readiness.

By shining a light on afterschool, FAN continues to build support for public and private investment in expanding learning opportunities that prepare our future leaders for success today.

### Impact and Outcomes:

Forged new partnerships with four organizations that paved the way for meaningful discussions on advocacy and policy-setting

Hosted an inaugural Public Policy Forum to expand the utilization of Quality Standards for Florida Afterschool and create the beginnings of a shared policy agenda

Was the recipient of a grant that focused on expanding the entrepreneurial mindset among Florida's youth through training and technical assistance

Was awarded a national research grant that resulted in sustained middle school girls' engagement of STEM activities into high school and beyond

# PROGRAMS OF THE

## T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® Scholarship Program

The T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® Scholarship Program (T.E.A.C.H.) is an evidence-based strategy that helps to establish a well-qualified, fairly-compensated, and stable workforce for Florida's children. Funded by the Florida Division of Early Learning and operated by the Children's Forum, T.E.A.C.H. provides scholarships for early childhood educators to work toward an Associate, Bachelor's, or Master's Degree in early childhood education, a Child Development Associate® (CDA) Credential™, a Florida Staff Credential, a Florida Director Credential, or credential renewals.

T.E.A.C.H. maintains a three-way partnership in which the early childhood educator, the sponsoring program (the scholar's employer), and T.E.A.C.H. share the costs for classes, books, and time away from work. Scholars earn a raise or bonus after the successful completion of an educational year and agree to work for at least one year with their sponsoring program.

### Impact and Outcomes:

| Educated Workforce:       | Economic Viability:                            | Reduced Turnover:                            |
|---------------------------|--|--|
| 25,981 credit hours taken | 8% average increase in earnings among Scholars | 6% turnover rate vs. national rate of 30-40% |
| 3.47 average Scholar GPA  |  |  |

## Early Childhood Educator INCENTIVE\$ Florida

Early Childhood Educator INCENTIVE\$ Florida, an affiliate of Child Care WAGE\$®, rewards early childhood educators with financial incentives based on their education and continuity of employment. By retaining the early childhood workforce, INCENTIVE\$ provides children with more stable relationships and better-educated teachers. INCENTIVE\$ addresses individual professional development efforts and low wages, but does not affect budgets, regular wages, or parent fees within the child care program. INCENTIVE\$ is licensed by Child Care Services Association of Chapel Hill, NC and administered by the Children's Forum under a contract with local early learning coalitions, children's services councils, and private contributors. Through these partnerships, INCENTIVE\$ is enhancing the professional development of early childhood educators to improve the quality of child care programs.

### Impact and Outcomes:



The average turnover rate for INCENTIVE\$ participants was **12%** compared to 30-40% turnover in the field nationally.



The average annual stipend for INCENTIVE\$ participants was **\$1,068** which is equivalent to at least \$0.51 more per hour.



**930** child care programs participated in INCENTIVE\$.



**2,609** recipients received at least one financial incentive.

# THE CHILDREN'S FORUM 2020-2021

## Help Me Grow® Florida

Help Me Grow® Florida (HMGF) promotes healthy development of all children by providing access to free developmental and behavioral screenings and connecting families to the resources they need to succeed. By building cross-sector collaboration among community agencies, child healthcare professionals, and early childhood educators, HMGF addresses the critical importance of early detection and intervention. HMGF provides a centralized access point that supports families by giving them parenting and developmental information, referral services, and available community resources. HMGF care coordinators continue to follow-up with the family until their needs have been met.

### Impact and Outcomes:



**7,132**

developmental and behavioral screenings completed



**92%**

children successfully connected to at least one service



**4,009**

children and 3,613 families served



**3,857**

referrals to community agencies and programs made

## Early Learning Career Center

Operated by the Children's Forum and funded by The Children's Trust (TCT), the Early Learning Career Center (ELCC) offers professional development services to all early learning programs and educators in Miami-Dade County. The ELCC, which is part of the Miami-Dade Early Learning Quality Improvement System (QIS), provides career advising and TCT Educator Scholarships in support of a diverse workforce. The ELCC also connects early childhood educators in Miami-Dade to other professional development supports such as Early Childhood Educator INCENTIVE\$ Florida, funded by TCT, and the T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® Scholarship Program.

### Impact and Outcomes:

**83%**

of educators recently received TCT scholarships and/or INCENTIVE\$ salary supports.

**83%**

of educators obtained a credential since entering the QIS.

**43%**

of educators report being bilingual.

On average, educators who earn degrees and credentials, speak English fluently, and stay in the QIS for 5+ years can increase their annual salary by

**\$10,774.**



*"The time is always right to do what is right."*

*-Martin Luther King, Jr.*

## Professional Development Registries

The Children's Forum maintains two professional development registries, the Miami-Dade Professional Development Registry and the Palm Beach County Training Registry. These registries provide a central database to record the workforce qualifications of early childhood educators, such as employment history, compensation, benefits, credentials earned, and college courses/training activities completed. Funding for the Miami-Dade Professional Development Registry and Palm Beach County Training Registry is provided by The Children's Trust and the Children's Services Council of Palm Beach County.

### Impact and Outcomes:

#### Program Participants:

**4,000**

in Palm Beach County

**5,000**

in Miami-Dade

#### ECE Program Improvement:

Registries can be used to make policy-informed decisions to improve the quality of early learning programs.

## Assessment and Coaching Services Unit

The Children's Forum holds a contract with the Florida Division of Early Learning for providing Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS®) observation and coaching services within each county in Florida. The Forum offers CLASS® services to early learning coalitions, Head Start agencies, and other entities to help them meet state and federal program assessment requirements and improve early childhood classroom practices. The Forum has provided CLASS® services in every region and over half of the counties in Florida.

### Impact and Outcomes:

**54**

certified CLASS® assessors and coaches were available to provide services.

**1,016**

early learning programs received assessments.

**21**

agencies received CLASS® services.

**2,642**

assessments were conducted.

## Child Care Evaluation Services

Now in its 14th contract year, the Child Care Evaluation Services unit provides the following accreditation management and educational support services for the Florida Department of Children and Families (DCF) Office of Child Care:

- ★ Evaluating applications from prospective Florida Child Care Professional Credential (FCCPC) training institutions to determine their eligibility to offer the FCCPC, and monitoring the status of all FCCPC training programs in the state
- ★ Evaluating applications from prospective and renewing accrediting associations to determine their eligibility for designation as Gold Seal Quality Care Accrediting Associations
- ★ Assisting owners/operators of early care and education (ECE) programs in Florida with questions about becoming a Gold Seal Quality Care designated program, assisting current Gold Seal programs with inquiries about their status, and maintaining the state database of early care and education programs that have attained Gold Seal status
- ★ Designing and producing public awareness documents for dissemination
- ★ Coordinating the DCF annual Statewide Child Care Training Meeting

### Impact and Outcomes:



**4**

newsletters and brochures for DCF were produced.



**1,932**

early childhood and family child care home programs maintained Gold Seal designation.

# NEWSWORTHY NOTES

## Forum Receives Family-Friendly Employer of the Year Award

The Forum was honored to receive the Family-Friendly Employer of the Year from Whole Child Leon. The award was presented to the Forum at the Whole Child Leon Inaugural Awards Gala.



## Forum Awarded Sub-Contract for VIQI Project (Variations in Implementation of Quality Interventions) Study

The Variations in Implementation of Quality Interventions (VIQI) is a large-scale study sponsored by the Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation (OPRE) in the Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The Children's Forum was recently awarded a sub-contract with MEF Associates as a part of the VIQI study to conduct coaching and data collection around early childhood curricula in the Central Florida area. The study aims to build new evidence to inform quality in center-based child care programs and Head Start policies and practices.

## Forum to Conduct Statewide Early Education and Care Workforce Study

The Children's Forum was recently awarded a contract with the Division of Early Learning, Department of Education to conduct a Statewide Early Education and Care Workforce Study. The study will examine employment characteristics, work environment, education, turnover, and COVID impacts for Florida's early learning workforce. Results will inform DEL on areas for policy improvement, strategic investment, and salary supports to help address chronic issues such as low wages, high turnover, and inadequate access to training and education.\*

## Virtual, Interactive, and Engaging: Children's Week Florida™ 2021 a Success

Due to the pandemic, the 26th annual Children's Week Florida™ was reimagined as a hybrid event, incorporating statewide, interactive virtual events with limited in-person activities. The Children's Forum, which is now the event's organizing partner, worked with community partners to reach supporters, advocates, and consumers in all corners and regions of the state. Get ready for the return of signature in-person activities at Children's Week Florida™ 2022!



## Forum Selected as Facilitator of Joint Referral Collaboration Summits

The Children's Forum received funding from the Division of Early Learning to facilitate a Joint Referral Collaboration (JRC) project aimed at working toward an equitable, family-driven system that is comprehensive, bidirectional, and cross-sector to support screening, referral, tracking, and early intervention services and supports for children and families. The Forum hosted a virtual statewide JRC Summit in August and regional meetings in October with a group of cross-sector screening and referral partners from around the state. Future JRC goals include developing a phased plan to reduce duplication of services, fill gaps, and strengthen efficiencies and effectiveness of the screening and referral system.\*

\*The project described is supported by the Preschool Development Grant Birth through Five Initiative (PDG B-5) Grant Number 90TP0068-02-00 from the Office of Child Care, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

## Children's Forum Staff

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Evelyn Thomas

April Wigsten

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Erika Williams\*\*

Heather Wilson\*\*\*

Tamela Young\*\*\*

\* Five-Nine Years of Service

\*\* Ten-Fourteen Years of Service

\*\*\* Fifteen Years of Service or More

## Children's Forum Board of Directors

Forum board members are volunteers who contribute their time and expertise to provide oversight and guidance on behalf of the Forum's mission. We are proud of their dedication to our work and grateful for their generous service.

**Phyllis Kalifeh, Ed.D.**

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## Funders & Clients

- AUCD/CDC Learn the Sings. Act Early
- Children's Services Council of Palm Beach County
- Economic Opportunities Council of Indian River County
- Division of Early Learning, FDOE
- ELC of Alachua County
- ELC of Broward County
- ELC of the Emerald Coast
- ELC of Escambia County
- ELC of Flagler/Volusia
- ELC of Florida's Heartland
- ELC of Hillsborough County
- ELC of Indian River, Martin and Okeechobee Counties (IRMO)
- ELC of Marion County
- ELC of the Nature Coast
- ELC of Northwest Florida
- ELC of Osceola County
- ELC of Polk County
- ELC of Seminole County
- ELC of Southwest Florida
- EOC of Indian River County
- Episcopal Children's Services
- Florida Afterschool Network
- Florida Association of Healthy Start Coalitions
- Florida Department of Children and Families
- Florida Family Child Care Home Association
- Florida Head Start Association
- Redlands Christian Migrant Association
- The Children's Trust
- United Way of Florida

## Financial Report

| 2020-2021  | Revenue             | Expenditures        |
|--|---------------------|---------------------|
| T.E.A.C.H.   | \$10,013,179        | \$10,073,759        |
| Help Me Grow® Florida  | \$1,802,876         | \$1,802,876         |
| Early Learning Career Center/Professional Development Registries | \$1,153,926         | \$1,151,812         |
| Early Childhood Educator INCENTIVE\$ Florida                     | \$1,272,665         | \$1,276,896         |
| Assessment and Coaching Services Unit                            | \$459,376           | \$444,522           |
| Child Care Evaluation Services                                   | \$162,562           | \$162,562           |
| Other  | \$525,264           | \$398,924           |
| <b>TOTAL</b>   | <b>\$15,389,848</b> | <b>\$15,311,351</b> |



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