

DIVISION OF EARLY LEARNING



ANNUAL REPORT 2024-2025

Every child has an opportunity to succeed when they have access to high-quality early care and education services.



The annual report for the Division of Early Learning is required by Section (s.) 1002.82, Florida Statutes (F.S.). Copies are available to download from www.floridaearlylearning.com or by contacting the division at 850-717-8550.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report by the Florida Department of Education's (FDOE) Division of Early Learning (DEL) is an overview of the division's financial and program activities in fiscal year (FY) 2024-2025, including an overview of the 30 Early Learning Coalitions (ELCs) and Redlands Christian Migrant Association (RCMA). The division partners with these entities to administer the School Readiness (SR) program, the School Readiness Plus (SR Plus) program, the Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) education program and the Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) program.

The ELCs and RCMA work to provide early care and education services to local communities based on area needs, create networks of public and private providers, establish partnerships to leverage economies of scale and collect match dollars to serve more families. The ELCs and RCMA are governed by federal grant program requirements and state laws.

This report includes summaries and overviews of:

- Expenditures associated with the programs the division administers.
- Fraud referrals made by FDOE's Inspector General's Office.
- Information about the activities of Florida's ELCs and RCMA.

For more information about DEL, visit <http://www.floridaearlylearning.com/>.

GENERAL FUNCTIONS

Early Care and Education

DEL is dedicated to providing accessible, affordable and quality early learning services for the state's children and families. In partnership with the state's ELCs and RCMA, the division administers the following programs:

- **Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R)** is a network that helps families identify and select quality child care options that best meet their needs.
- The **School Readiness (SR)** program offers financial assistance to low-income families for early education and care so they can become economically self-sufficient and their young children can be successful in school in the future.
- The **School Readiness Plus (SR Plus)** program helps low-income families pay for child care while lessening the effect of the "benefits cliff" when those families are no longer eligible for the SR Program.
- **Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK)** is a free educational program that prepares 4-year-olds for success in kindergarten and beyond.

DEL governs operations of early learning programs for the state and administers funds to ELCs and statewide contractors. Other DEL duties include federal reporting requirements, programmatic/financial monitoring and oversight tasks outlined in federal and/or state regulations.



Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R)

DEL is responsible for the statewide CCR&R resource and referral network and contracts with ELCs and RCMA for services in each of Florida’s 67 counties. Each ELC is responsible for providing services at no cost to families and providers in their communities.

DEL’s CCR&R unit provides ongoing technical assistance and training to ELCs and their subcontractors on a range of topics including generating child care listings, reviewing and approving early learning provider profiles and maintaining data integrity within the statewide information system. Additionally, DEL informs families and providers about Florida’s early learning programs and community resources, connecting them to their local ELC for continued support.

In FY 2024-2025, DEL collaborated with the Florida State University, Florida Center for Interactive Media, to produce 10 family education videos now available on DEL’s website. These videos offer valuable insight into family engagement strategies and educational resources that support early learning, growth and development. To further empower families to be their child’s first teacher and select the best learning environment for their child, *The Family Guide*, *Quality Checklist*, *First Teacher Book: Birth to 3 Year Olds* and *First Teacher Book: 4 Year Olds* are also available on the website.

FY2024-2025 CCR&R Service Requests

32,038	Number of requests for assistance through the State CCR&R’s toll-free number and CCR&R’s Help Inbox.
402,196	Number of CCR&R Family Intake Forms completed in DEL’s single statewide information system.
4,283	Number of CCR&R Provider Intake Forms completed in DEL’s single statewide information system.
10,232	Number of legally operating child care providers maintained in a directory by ELCs.



School Readiness (SR)

Florida's SR program offers low-income families financial assistance to facilitate access to high-quality child care and early education for their children while parents work or participate in job training and/or educational activities.

DEL administers the program at the state level while ELCs administer the SR program at the county and regional levels. Funding comes from four sources – the Child Care and Development Block Grant, the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Block Grant, the Social Services Block Grant and the state of Florida.

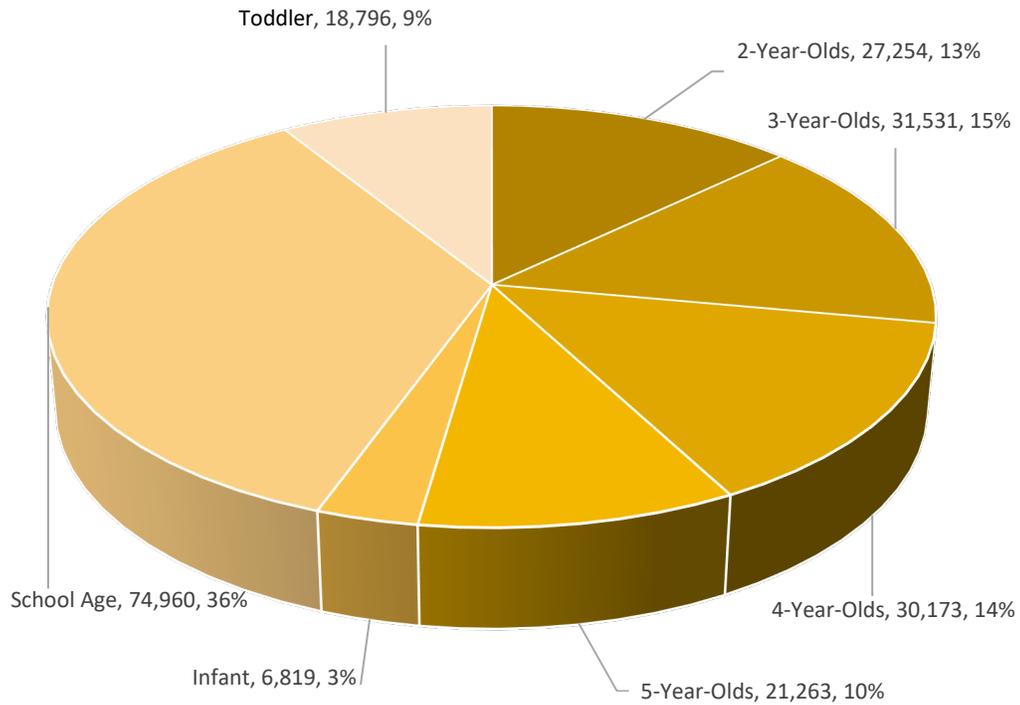
The program supports families in becoming economically self-sufficient and helps children from qualifying families develop school readiness skills. The program gives children access to a quality early learning environment and supports parents with information about child development and family engagement. Each SR provider's quality of instruction is measured by administering a widely recognized program assessment, the Classroom Assessment Scoring System® (CLASS), that assesses the quality of interactions between adults and children in the classroom.

Florida's SR program works to:

- Prepare young children to start kindergarten ready to learn.
- Help working families afford quality early learning services.
- Keep parents in the workforce and/or participating in education or training activities.
- Help families become financially independent.
- Support parents with information about child development and family well-being.

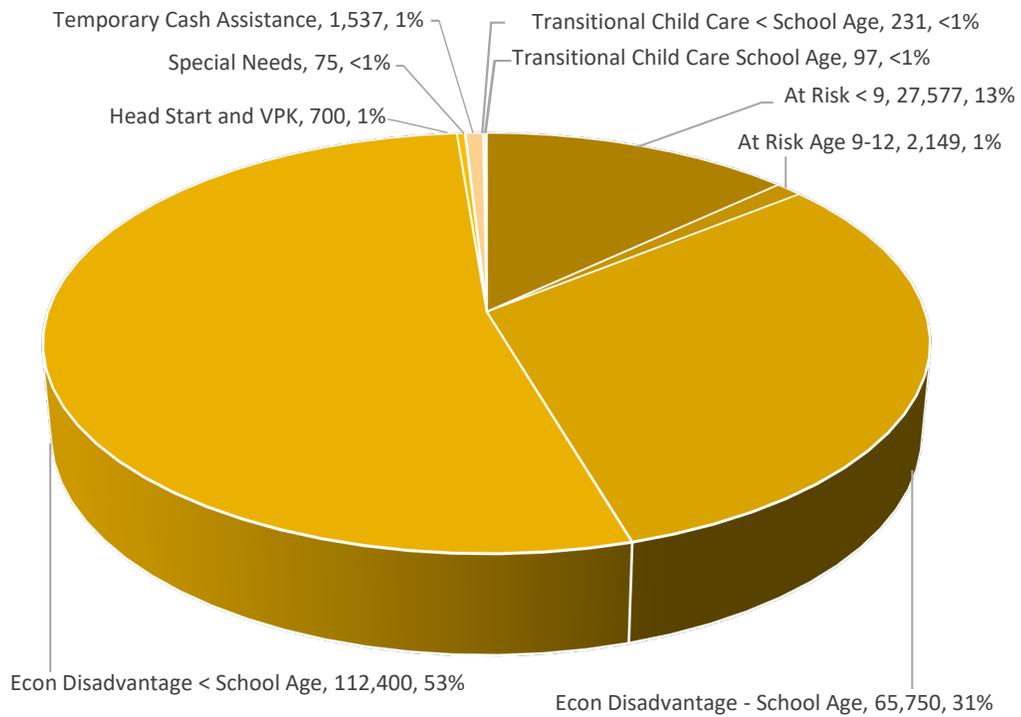
In FY 2024-2025, there were 210,786 children enrolled with 6,919 early learning providers in Florida's SR program.

School Readiness Enrollments by Age Group FY 2024-2025 (n = 210,786)



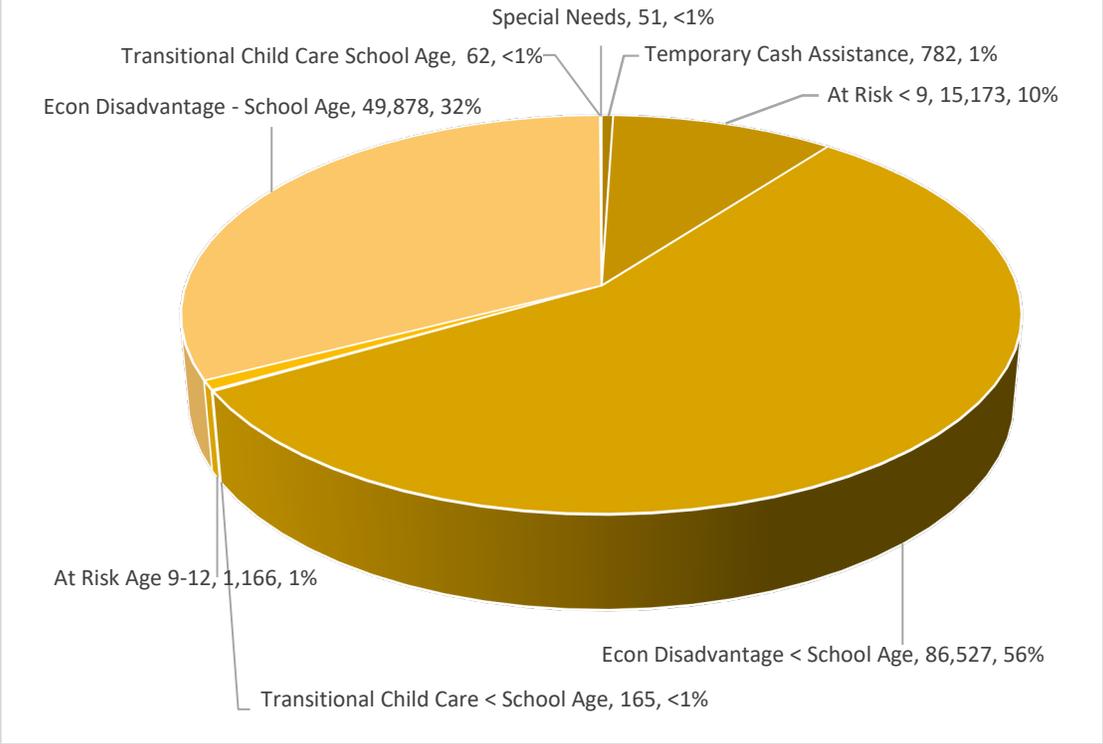
Source: EFS Modernization database as of November 1, 2025.

School Readiness Enrollments by Priority Group: FY 2024-2025 (n = 210,786)



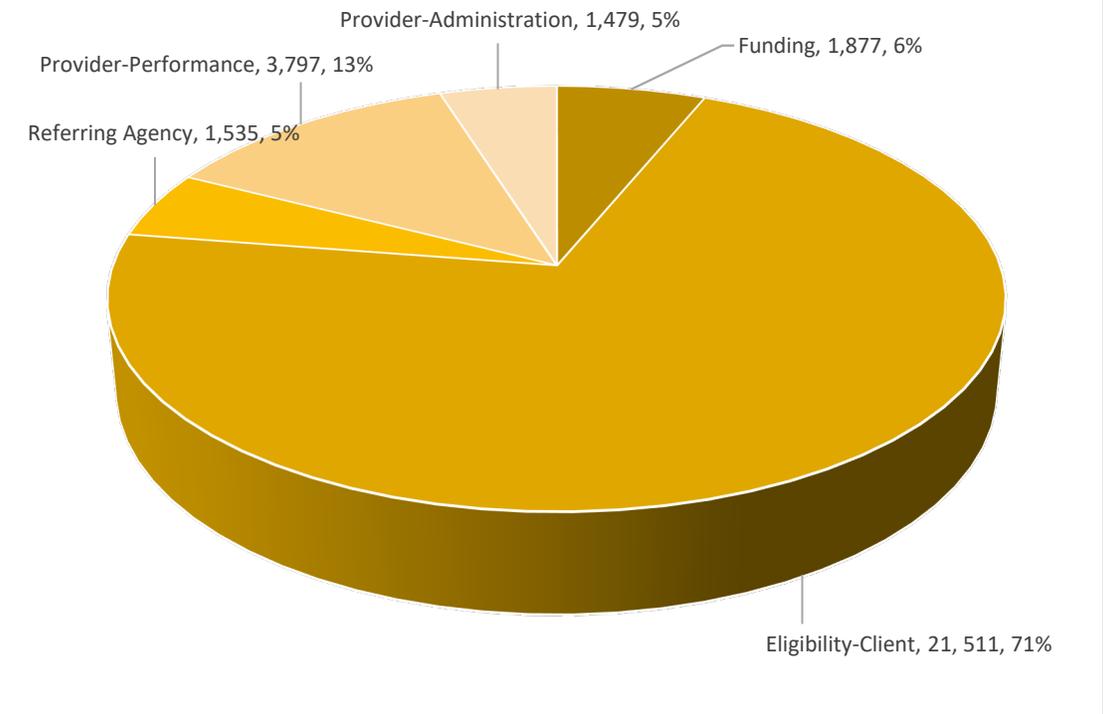
Source: EFS Modernization database as of November 1, 2025.

School Readiness Enrollments
Monthly Averages by Priority Group FY 2024-2025
(n = 153,804)



Source: EFS Modernization database as of November 1, 2025.

School Readiness Disenrollments
by Source of Action FY 2024-2025 (n = 30,199)



Source: EFS Modernization database as of November 1, 2025.

FY 2024-2025 SR Enrollment Count by Coalition and RCMA

Coalition	Child Count
ELC of Alachua	2,546
ELC of the Big Bend Region	5,502
ELC of Brevard	5,723
ELC of Broward	20,406
ELC of Duval	12,981
ELC of the Emerald Coast	2,073
ELC of Escambia	3,555
ELC of Flagler and Volusia Counties	5,763
ELC of Florida's Gateway	2,409
ELC of Florida's Heartland, Inc.	2,163
ELC of Hillsborough	17,988
ELC of Indian River, Martin, Okeechobee (IRMO)	2,247
ELC of Lake	2,983
ELC of Manatee	3,613
ELC of Marion	3,132
ELC of Miami-Dade/Monroe	25,100
ELC of the Nature Coast	2,507
ELC of North Florida	5,083
ELC of Northwest Florida	3,503
ELC of Orange	15,058
ELC of Osceola	3,981
ELC of Palm Beach	20,945
ELC of Pasco and Hernando Counties	5,096
ELC of Pinellas	8,165
ELC of Polk	8,173
ELC of Santa Rosa	1,227
ELC of Sarasota	1,807
ELC of Seminole	2,887
ELC of Southwest Florida	7,134
ELC of St. Lucie	5,002
Redlands Christian Migrant Association (RCMA)	2,024
Total	210,786

FY 2024-2025 School Readiness Program- Waiting List History

Rule 6M-4.300, Florida Administrative Code (F.A.C.), requires a parent applying for the SR program to answer a prequalifying questionnaire, complete an initial application and provide limited supporting documentation of the reason they need care (just one of the program's eligibility criteria).

After the parent submits the application, the coalition determines if the family is potentially eligible, based on the limited information provided. If the family is determined potentially eligible, the coalition places the child(ren) on the waitlist and notifies the parent that they are on the waiting list.

To help families waiting for SR services, DEL works with local CCR&R specialists to provide information about other programs families may be eligible for, such as Head Start, Early Head Start and locally funded programs that offer free or reduced-priced child care. Local CCR&R programs also provide families with lists of locally funded community resources to help families until SR program funding becomes available.

FY 2024-2025 School Readiness Waiting List	
Month	Children Waiting
July	11,213
August	12,541
September	13,305
October	13,269
November	14,187
December	15,816
January	14,903
February	13,944
March	13,454
April	12,705
May	15,677
June	18,948
Monthly Average	14,164
Maximum for the FY	18,948
Minimum for the FY	11,213

Source: EFS Modernization database as of November 1, 2025.

Monthly counts represent the number of children waiting for School Readiness services on the last day of the month.

SR Program Assessments

Florida continues to lead the nation with its commitment to building the foundation for the success of our young Floridians. Qualified observers have used the Classroom Assessment Scoring System® (CLASS) to measure the quality of teacher-child interactions in the SR program since 2018. In FY 2024-2025, 4,661 SR providers participated in CLASS.

HISTORICAL SR PROGRAM ASSESSMENT CONTRACTING THRESHOLDS	
Program Year	Minimum Contracting Threshold on CLASS
2019-2020	2.51
2020-2021	3.50
2021-2022	3.50
2022-2023	4.00
2023-2024	4.00
2024-2025	4.00

Providers, unless exempt, must receive a score of at least 4.00 on CLASS' 7.00 scale to be eligible to receive an SR contract. Contracted SR providers can receive up to a 10-percent differential reimbursement rate based on their program assessment scores. In FY 2024-2025, 1,080 providers with CLASS composite scores of 4.50 to 4.99 received a 4-percent differential, 2,760 providers with composite scores of 5.00 to 5.99 received a 7-percent differential, and 381 providers with composite scores of 6.00 to 7.00 received a 10-percent differential.

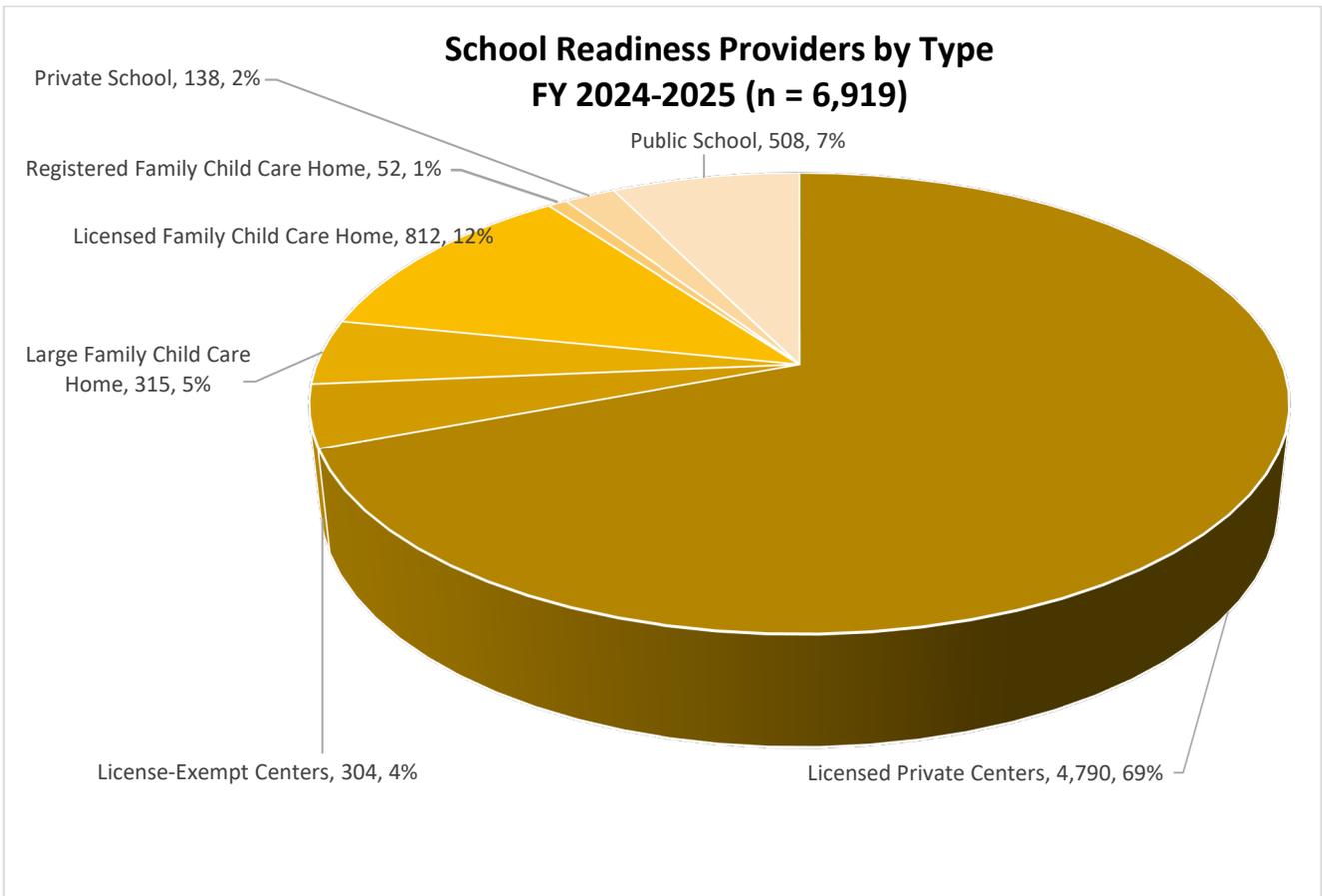
In FY 2024-2025, over 99 percent (4,631) of participating SR providers met the minimum contracting threshold by scoring 4.00 or higher on CLASS with a CLASS average score of 5.23. Of that number, almost 91 percent of participating providers received a CLASS composite score of 4.50 or higher making them eligible to receive a quality performance incentive. Providers who receive a score below 4.00 can no longer contract as an SR provider. However, if the provider is in a child care desert, the ELC may waive the contract minimum threshold program assessment score if the provider agrees to be on a quality improvement plan (QIP) for 12 months. During FY 2024-2025, 26 QIPs were created. Of the 26 SR providers on QIPs, there were 14 completed, 5 in progress and 6 that had not started. Additionally, 35 providers who scored below the threshold no longer contract as an SR provider.

SR CLASS Assessment Results - July 1, 2024, through June 30, 2025

SR:
 Over 99% of SR providers
 scored 4.00 or higher
 CLASS Average: 5.23

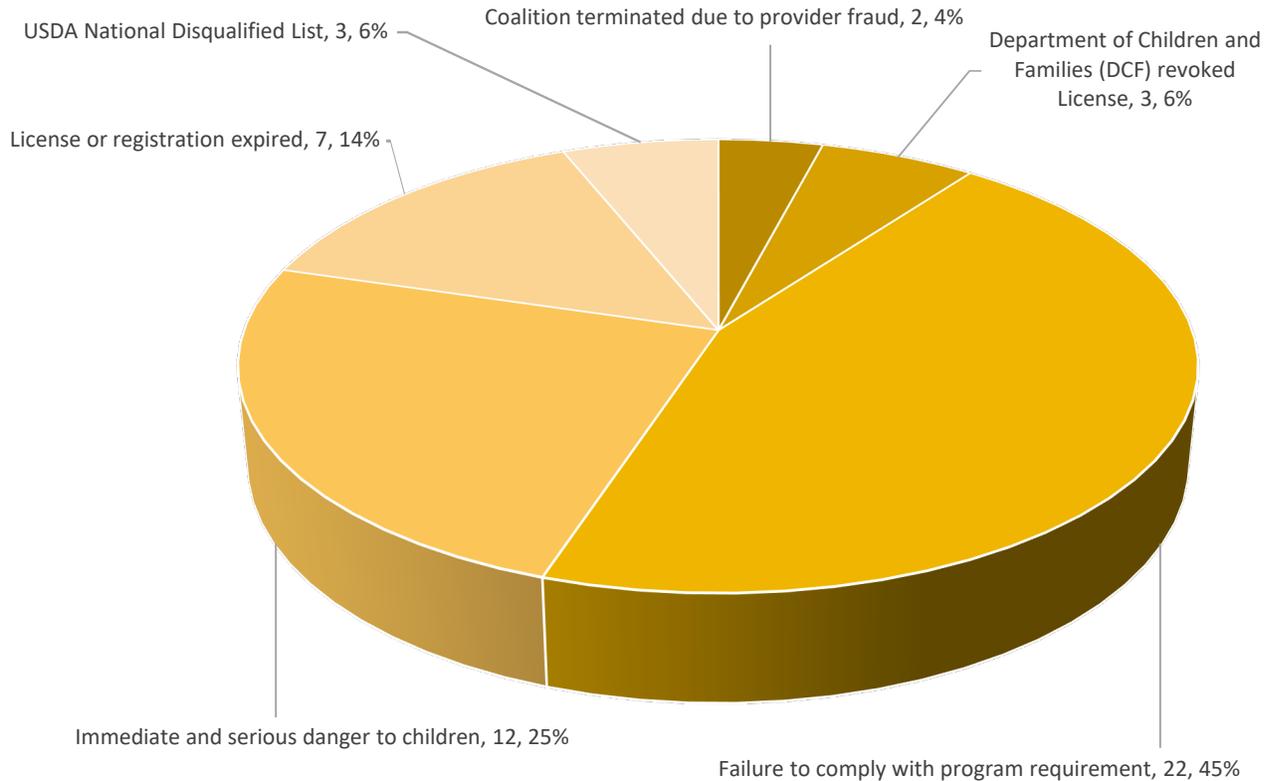
Overall Score Group	Count of SR Providers
Below 3.00	1
3.00 to 3.49	5
3.50 to 3.99	24
4.00 to 4.49	410
4.50 to 4.99	1,080
5.00 to 5.49	1,667
5.50 to 5.99	1,093
6.00 to 6.49	321
6.50 and above	60
Grand Total	4,661

Total does not include providers exempt from CLASS.



Source: EFS Modernization database as of November 1, 2025.

School Readiness Provider Contracts Revoked by Cause: FY 2024-2025 (n = 49)



Source: EFS Modernization database as of November 1, 2025.

Warm Line Services

Each ELC offers Warm Line services for consultations with a coordinator. This is designed to assist parents and providers by offering information regarding disabilities and special health care needs to children from birth to age 5. The coordinators are responsible for ensuring that developmental screenings are performed and that any necessary referrals are made. Developmental screening involves systematic observation and monitoring of potential delays in one or more areas of a young child's development.

The Warm Line Network is comprised of more than 120 members, which includes early childhood coordinators from all 30 ELCs and RCMA. DEL organizes meetings and technical assistance sessions within the network to facilitate information sharing, engage with guest speakers and address the current needs of children with developmental delays and disabilities. Each ELC provides access to Warm Line services as part of their early learning offerings, aimed at assisting parents and providers with information and referrals for child evaluations and services.

Coordinators act following a developmental screening that reveals areas of concern or in response to inquiries received through the Warm Line. They offer technical assistance to both providers and parents, identify targeted interventions for individual children needing extra support and facilitate early interventions for children before they enter kindergarten.

For FY 2024-2025, the ELCs recorded the following:

- 77,113 child care program observations were conducted and strategies were provided to address developmental concerns so all children are engaged in the learning process in all settings.
- 31,950 child care program observations were conducted and strategies were provided to address social skills, emotional competence and behavioral concerns to help children succeed in the early learning environment.
- 7,782 child care program observations were conducted related to individual educational plans for each child.
- 812 child care program observations were conducted concerning children with medical issues.
- 42,188 child care program observations were conducted to support early learning programs, which included assistance for teachers, guidance on classroom management, curriculum support and environmental modifications.
- 169,681 technical assistance sessions were provided to child care programs.
- 15,361 referrals were made to other agencies for children who needed additional services.

Preservice Training

Child care personnel at all SR providers must complete required SR preservice training. The courses are available online in the Florida Early Childhood Professional Development Registry and are free of charge with exams embedded within the courses. All new SR personnel must complete all applicable courses within 90 days.

Preservice Training Course Completion FY 2024-2025	
Course Name	Course Completions
Health and Nutrition in the School Readiness Program	24,197
Safety Practices in the School Readiness Program	23,839
Safe Sleep Practices in Child Care	23,429
Child Development in the School Readiness Program	25,346
Transportation Safety in Child Care Programs	19,252

Screening and Assessment Practices

Early identification and intervention play a crucial role in addressing developmental concerns in children. The number of Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ)-3 screenings was 116,265 in 2024-2025.

Providers have the option to participate in child assessments that measure a child's growth across the core domains of early childhood development. Participating providers receive a 5-percent differential payment per eligible child, per assessment period. In FY 2024-2025, 583 SR providers received this differential.

Child assessment remains an integral component of the quality differential for SR providers. Since the program's inception, DEL has observed a steady rise in the overall number of children assessed. In the 2019-2020 fiscal year, 447 providers participated, impacting 8,138 children, while the 2024-2025 fiscal year recorded 583 participating providers, benefiting 15,044 children.

School Readiness Child Assessment Data		
Fiscal Year	Provider Count	Child Count
2019 - 2020	447	8,138
2020 - 2021	533	12,839
2021 - 2022	596	13,036
2022 - 2023	609	14,807
2023 - 2024	586	14,290
2024 - 2025	583	15,044

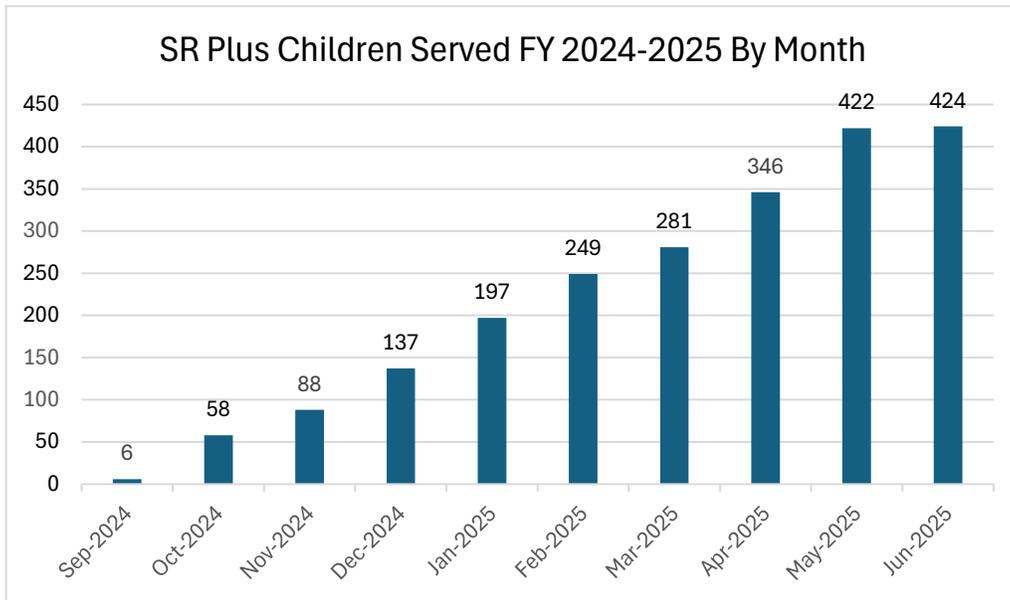
Informal Career Pathway Research

The Early Childhood Policy Research Group (ECPRG) at the University of Florida Anita Zucker Center for Excellence in Early Childhood Studies developed recommendations and modifications for an informal career pathway. A Statewide Advisory Committee assisted with analyzing, reviewing and providing feedback throughout the research and framework development process. This collaborative effort aims to ensure compliance with statutory requirements and to create a competency-based, stackable framework that spans from onboarding to micro-credentials and summative credentials for professionals working with children from birth to age 5.

As part of the framework, the ECPRG developed Early Childhood Educator Competencies, Coaching Competencies and other tools to support implementation of the Early Childhood Educator Informal Pathway.

School Readiness Plus

In September 2024, the state-funded SR Plus program was established in law under s. 1002.935, F.S. SR families with incomes between 85 to 100 percent of the State Median Income are eligible for the SR Plus program. SR Plus helps low-income families pay for child care while lessening the effect of the “benefits cliff” when they are deemed no longer eligible for the full subsidy under the SR program. SR Plus ensures that families are economically self-sufficient and can assume the full cost of child care when they exit the program by paying an increased portion toward the cost of their child care as their incomes increase.



FY 2024-2025 SR Plus Children Served

Coalition/RCMA	Child Count
ELC of Alachua	4
ELC of Brevard	23
ELC of Broward	61
ELC of Duval	15
ELC of Escambia	8
ELC of Flagler and Volusia Counties	33
ELC of Florida's Gateway	2
ELC of Florida's Heartland, Inc.	7
ELC of Hillsborough	38
ELC of Indian River, Martin, Okeechobee (IRMO)	17
ELC of Lake	5
ELC of Manatee	3
ELC of Marion	14
ELC of Miami-Dade/Monroe	57
ELC of North Florida	26
ELC of Northwest Florida	10
ELC of Orange County	32
ELC of Osceola	4
ELC of Palm Beach	43
ELC of Pasco & Hernando Counties	3
ELC of Pinellas	27
ELC of Polk	9
ELC of Santa Rosa	7
ELC of Sarasota	9
ELC of Seminole	16
ELC of Southwest Florida	17
ELC of St. Lucie	15
ELC of the Big Bend Region	13
ELC of the Emerald Coast	2
ELC of the Nature Coast	16
Redlands Christian Migrant Association (RCMA)	0
Total	536



Voluntary Prekindergarten Education Program

The VPK program prepares children for success in school and in life. The program is a free, high-quality education program available to all 4-year-old children residing in the state.

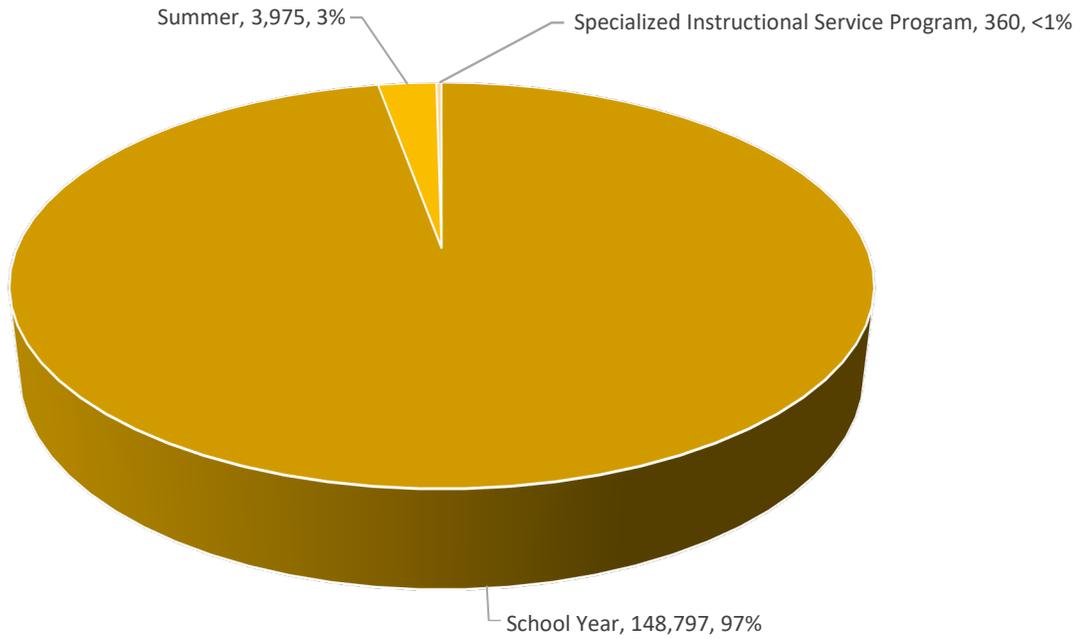
Parents of 4-year-olds with birthdays from February 2 through September 1 may wait to enroll their child the following year when they are 5.

DEL administers VPK program operations at the state level. Mandated by the Florida Constitution, the program originated in 2002 from a ballot initiative proposing an amendment. Data collected by FDOE show that children who participate in VPK are better prepared to enter kindergarten ready for school. Parents can select from one of several VPK program options available from private and public providers. Providers have flexibility to structure daily hours per week to meet the required number of instructional hours: School-Year Program - 540 instructional hours; Summer Program - 300 instructional hours.

VPK Specialized Instructional Services is a program option available for VPK-age children with current individual educational plans (IEPs). This option allows parents of a VPK-age child to choose additional therapy services consistent with the child's IEP in lieu of attending VPK in a traditional classroom setting. Providers must be approved by FDOE and meet specific licensing or certification requirements based on the type of specialized service they provide.

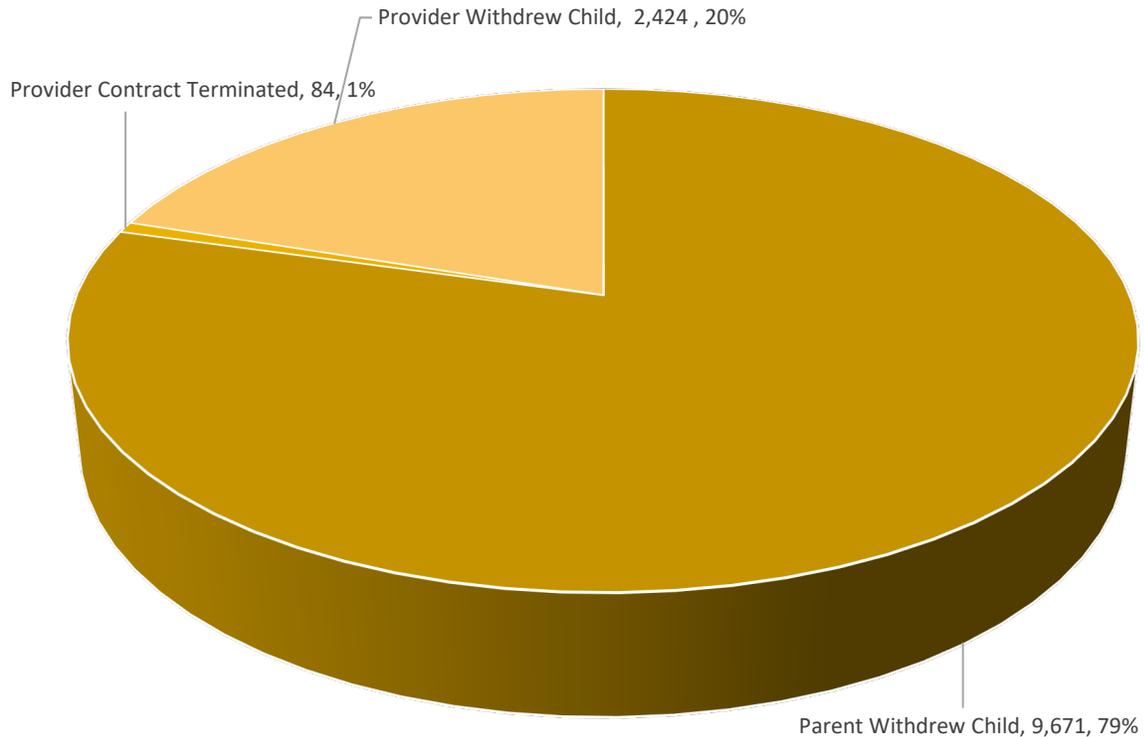
In 2024-2025, there were 153,132 children enrolled with 6,292 providers in Florida's VPK program.

Children Enrolled in VPK FY 2024-2025 (n = 153,132)



Source: EFS Modernization database as of November 1, 2025.

VPK Disenrollments by Source of Action FY 2024-2025 (n = 12,179)



Source: EFS Modernization database as of November 1, 2025.

FY 2024-2025 VPK Child Count by Coalition and RCMA

Coalition	Child Count
ELC of Alachua	1,546
ELC of Brevard	4,417
ELC of Broward	13,220
ELC of Duval	8,471
ELC of Escambia	1,769
ELC of Flagler and Volusia Counties	4,075
ELC of Florida's Gateway	1,089
ELC of Florida's Heartland, Inc.	1,692
ELC of Hillsborough	11,317
ELC of Indian River, Martin, Okeechobee (IRMO)	2,390
ELC of Lake	2,655
ELC of Manatee	2,848
ELC of Marion	2,228
ELC of Miami-Dade/Monroe	20,517
ELC of North Florida	6,073
ELC of Northwest Florida	1,777
ELC of Orange	12,162
ELC of Osceola	3,583
ELC of Palm Beach	10,738
ELC of Pasco & Hernando Counties	6,105
ELC of Pinellas	5,158
ELC of Polk	4,646
ELC of Santa Rosa	1,153
ELC of Sarasota	1,871
ELC of Seminole	4,082
ELC of Southwest Florida	7,564
ELC of St. Lucie	2,568
ELC of the Big Bend Region	2,630
ELC of the Emerald Coast	2,174
ELC of the Nature Coast	1,893
Redlands Christian Migrant Association (RCMA)	721
Total	153,132

Coordinated Screening and Progress Monitoring

The 2024-2025 program year was the third year of implementation of the Coordinated Screening and Progress Monitoring program. This statewide, standardized program is known as the Florida Assessment of Student Thinking (FAST) Star Early Literacy. FAST Star Early Literacy is a computer-adaptive assessment administered a minimum of three times a year,

designed to assess and monitor VPK student achievement and learning gains of the performance standards in early literacy and mathematics.

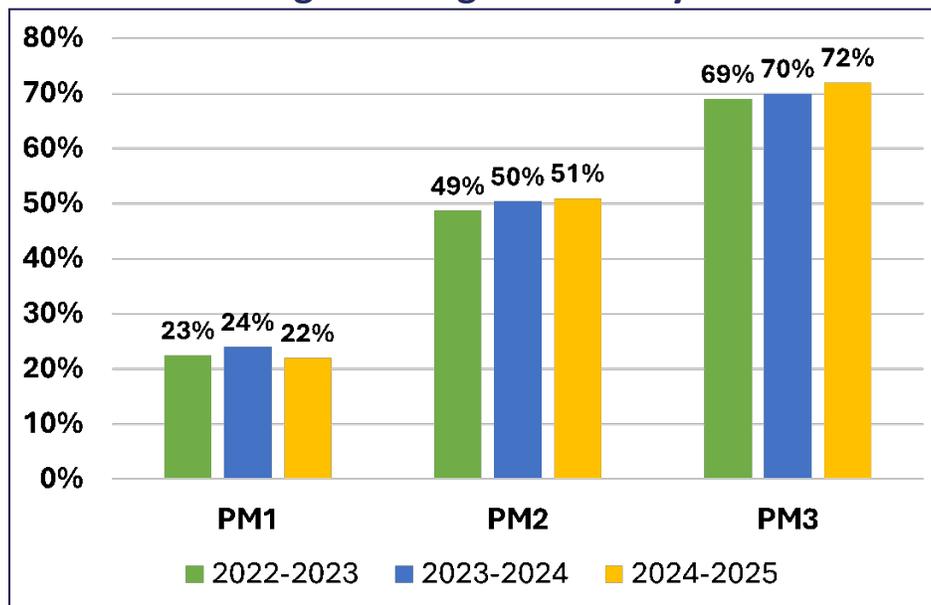
FAST Star Early Literacy VPK Results

For the 2024-2025 VPK program year, the chart below displays FAST Star Early Literacy results. In August 2024, the State Board of Education adopted a new scaled score of 707 indicating kindergarten readiness. The chart below shows the percentage of students who scored at or above a scaled score of 707 by each progress monitoring (PM) period in 2022-2023, 2023-2024 and 2024-2025.

By the end of the 2024-2025 VPK program year's third and final progress monitoring (PM3), 72 percent of students scored at or above the 707 scaled score, meeting the 2024-2025 cut score for kindergarten readiness.

2024-2025 FAST Star Early Literacy VPK Results (Program Year)

Percent Scoring "Kindergarten Ready" and Above



VPK Program Assessments

The 2024-2025 program year also was the third year of implementation of the program assessment, CLASS, in all VPK classrooms as part of Florida's new accountability system. More than 99 percent of participating VPK providers met the minimum contracting threshold by scoring 4.00 or higher, with a CLASS average composite score of 5.31. Ninety-two percent of participating providers received a CLASS composite score higher than 4.50.

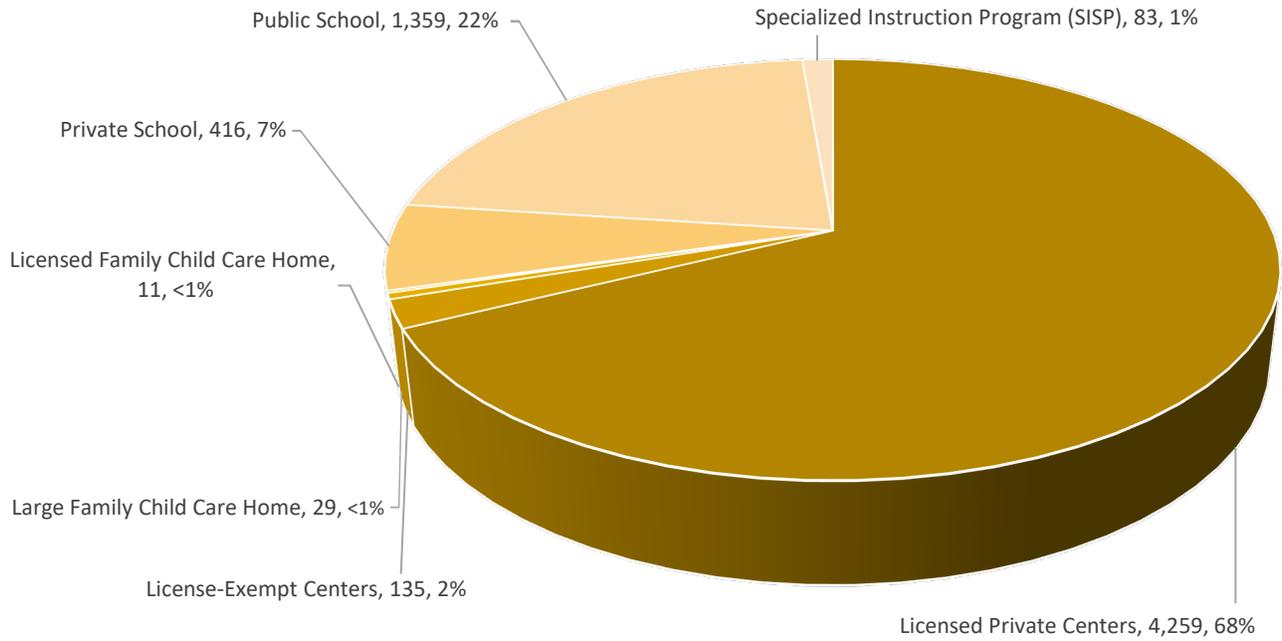
Section 1002.68(5)(a), F.S., stipulates that providers who do not meet the minimum contracting threshold by scoring 4.00 or higher on CLASS may not participate in the VPK program. During the 2024-2025 program year, 7 providers did not meet the minimum contracting threshold.

VPK CLASS Assessment Results - Program Year 2024-2025

Overall Score Group	Count of VPK Providers
Below 3.00	1
3.00 to 3.49	0
3.50 to 3.99	6
4.00 to 4.49	482
4.50 to 4.99	1,175
5.00 to 5.49	2,085
5.50 to 5.99	1,731
6.00 to 6.49	522
6.50 to 7	81
Grand Total	6,083

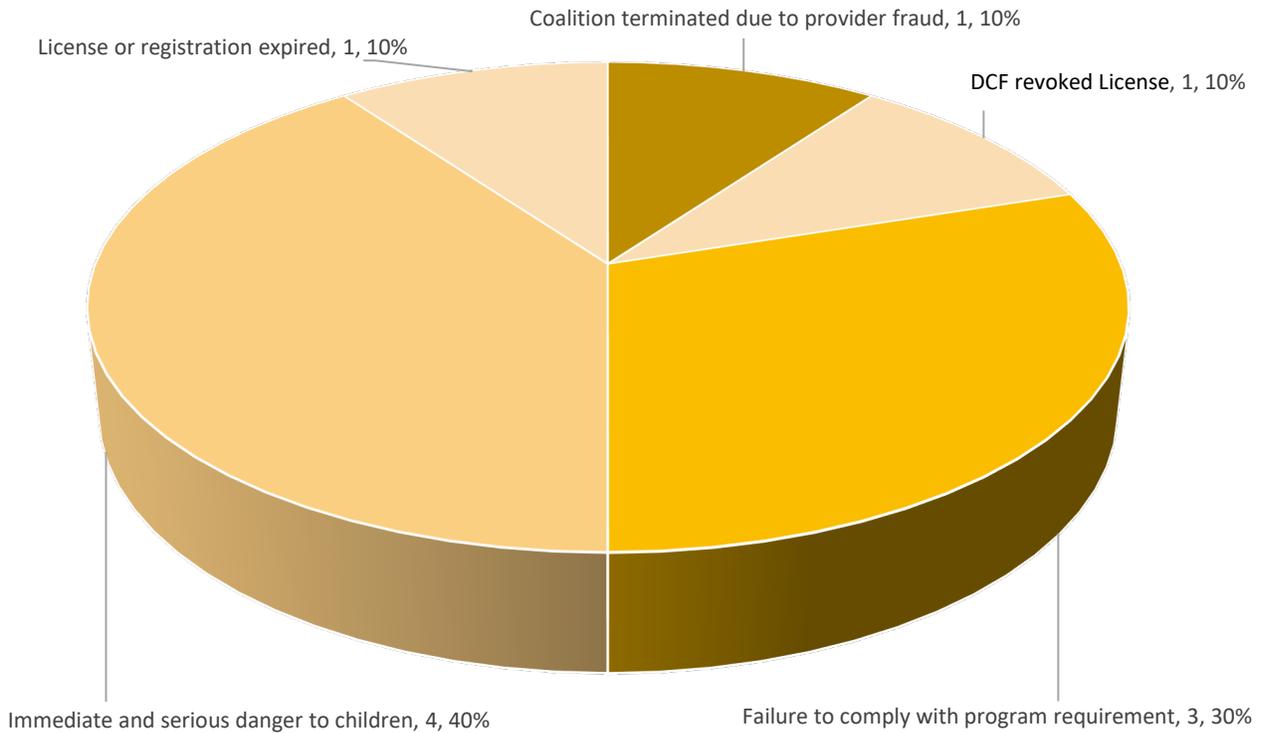
VPK:
 More than 99% of VPK providers
 scored 4.00 or higher
 CLASS Average: 5.31

**VPK Providers by Type FY
2024-2025 (n = 6,292)**



Source: EFS Modernization database as of November 1, 2025.

**VPK Provider Contracts
Revoked by Cause: FY 2024-2025 (n = 10)**



Source: EFS Modernization database as of November 1, 2025.

VPK Accountability

The 2024-2025 program year is the first year of the new VPK Accountability system. A VPK provider’s performance metric comprises a combination of data points:

- Program assessment composite scores;
- Student learning gains from the initial and final progress monitoring results; and
- Student learning outcomes as determined by the final progress monitoring results.

The VPK provider performance metric and designations that providers earn represent the quality of the instruction provided in the VPK program, child learning growth and kindergarten readiness. Both FAST Star Early Literacy and CLASS data are used to increase knowledge and skills of early learning professionals through targeted professional learning and coaching supports.

VPK providers whose performance designations are above expectations will earn recognition funds pending legislative appropriation. There was no appropriation provided for this for 2025-2026. VPK providers whose performance designations fall below the adopted minimum performance designation are placed on probation and must take corrective action including the use of an approved curriculum and a staff development and communications plan. Providers who do not have sufficient data to receive a performance metric designation have an Incomplete status and must complete a technical assistance plan to strengthen their administrative or instructional practices.

The 2024-2025 school year and summer VPK provider performance metrics and designations resulted in 6,240 providers earning a designation or incomplete status with the following overall results:

- 88 percent of providers met or exceeded expectations.
- 7 percent of providers did not meet expectations and are on probation.
- 5 percent of providers received an incomplete status.

Performance Metric Ranges - 2024-2025 Programs								
Designations	Performance Metric Range	# Providers	% Providers	Average CLASS	Average Achievement	Average % of Children Meeting Achievement	Average Monthly Learning Gains	Average % of Children Meeting Learning Gains Criteria
Excellent	61 - 100	2,066	33.11%	5.72	809	88%	21	78%
Above Expectations	46 - 60	1,941	31.11%	5.28	762	75%	14	57%
Meets Expectations	28 - 45	1,493	23.93%	4.99	724	58%	10	35%
Below Expectations	16 - 27	373	5.98%	4.63	689	38%	6	19%
Unsatisfactory	0 - 15	43	0.69%	4.46	651	16%	3	7%
Incomplete	N/A	324	5.19%	5.18	760	N/A	17	N/A

Good Cause Exemptions (GCE) for VPK Providers

Providers who fail to meet the minimum performance metric or designation for three consecutive years may request a good cause exemption, which, if granted, would allow the provider to continue providing the VPK program. The exemption is valid for one year and may be renewed through the same application process annually.

Due to the transition to a new VPK Accountability system, there are no VPK providers operating under a good cause exemption for the 2025-2026 VPK program year.

New Worlds Reading Initiative

The New Worlds Reading Initiative delivers a free book and family tips each month of the school year directly to eligible students' homes to strengthen their literacy skills, build confidence and foster a lifelong love of reading. VPK children who score below the 40th percentile on FAST Star Early Literacy are eligible to participate and remain enrolled in the program through fifth grade. As of June 19, 2025, 7,149 VPK children were enrolled in the New Worlds Reading Initiative for the 2024-2025 program.

Emergent Literacy Micro-Credential

Created in partnership with the University of Florida Lastinger Center for Learning, the Emergent Literacy Micro-Credential is available at no cost to Florida early learning educators to access on-demand emergent literacy professional learning. The Emergent Literacy Micro-Credential prepares early learning educators to:

- Support child outcomes for school readiness;
- Identify emergent literacy needs of children;
- Apply evidence-based practices; and
- Engage in effective progress monitoring and instruction.

As of June 30, 2025	
Participants who fully completed the Emergent Literacy Micro-Credential	2,658

Gold Seal Quality Care Program

Established in 1996, the Gold Seal program recognizes child care facilities and family day care homes that exceed the minimum licensing standards by achieving accreditation from recognized agencies that uphold high-quality care and supervision for children.

Participation in this program is optional and open to all types of providers who fit the definition of child care, with the exception of specific license-exempt school-age programs

outlined in Rule 65C-22.008(3), F.A.C. The Gold Seal program offers various advantages to participating providers, including tax exemptions on certain educational materials and property taxes, as well as increased reimbursement rates for SR providers.

During FY 2024-2025 there were:

- 17 Gold Seal approved accrediting associations.
- 1,934 Gold Seal designated child care providers, of which 1,589 were contracted for SR and 1,648 were contracted for VPK.
- 49 providers removed from the Gold Seal program due to licensing regulation violations.

Head Start Collaboration Office

The Florida Head Start State Collaboration Office operates within DEL and works to support and improve the collaboration between Early Head Start/Head Start and other providers of educational, medical and social services in Florida to support the state's most vulnerable children and families. The office coordinates federal, state and local policy to help ensure a high-quality and unified early care and education system for the state. In partnership with DEL and the Florida Head Start Association, the Collaboration Office coordinates activities within key state agencies and other early childhood associations and advocacy groups to support the comprehensive services provided by Head Start programs.

Customer Service Satisfaction

DEL administers an annual coalition customer satisfaction survey to strengthen community engagement and ensure continual improvement in service experience for participants. Survey results are an element of coalition performance standards outlined in s. 1002.82(3)(a), F.S. In 2022, a workgroup provided recommendations on the survey questions and monthly outreach began in January 2023 to clients requesting CCR&R services, families eligible for SR and VPK programs, providers contracted to serve SR and VPK families and coalition and RCMA board members.

Implementation of the survey in FY 2022-2023 laid the groundwork for future enhancements to each survey, including distribution and algorithms to evaluate answers and survey results from FY 2023-2024 established baseline data. Having received FY 2024-2025 data, DEL will calculate RCMA's and each ELC's survey results to determine if they meet the required customer satisfaction survey threshold and if corrective action is needed.

Financial Review

Descriptions of Expenditure Classifications

School Readiness Program expenditures are classified in accordance with federal regulations (45 Code of Federal Regulations (C.F.R.) section 98) and state statutes (s. 1002.82, F.S.). The following table describes the expenditure classifications for tracking and reporting program expenditures.

Direct Costs	Costs for direct payments to child care facilities for child care.
Gold Seal Costs	Costs related to the Gold Seal Quality Care program, which allows higher reimbursement per child for providers who are accredited by nationally recognized agencies and meet quality standards.
Administrative Costs	<p>Costs identified in federal regulations that include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Salaries and related costs for staff engaged in administering and implementing programs. – Developing agreements. – Evaluating program results. – Procurement and contract management. – Providing local officials and the public with program information. – Fiscal and budgetary activities. – Legal services. – Resolution of audit findings.
Non-Direct Costs	<p>Costs for services not classified as administrative or direct payment for child care services. These services include, but are not limited to, the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Helping families complete required application and eligibility documentation. – Determining child and family eligibility. – Recruiting eligible child care providers. – Processing and tracking attendance records. – Developing and maintaining a statewide child care information system.
Quality Costs	<p>Costs related to activities to improve child care quality such as the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Developing, establishing, expanding, operating and coordinating resource and referral programs specifically related to the provision of comprehensive consumer education to parents and the public to promote informed child care choices. – Awarding grants and providing financial support to SR providers and their staff to assist them in meeting applicable state requirements for the program assessment, child care performance standards, implementing developmentally appropriate curricula and related classroom resources that support curricula, providing literacy supports, and providing continued professional learning and training. – Providing training, technical assistance and financial support to SR providers, staff and parents on standards; child screenings; child assessments; child development research and best practices; developmentally appropriate curricula; character development; teacher-child interactions; age-appropriate discipline practices; health and safety; nutrition; first aid; cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR); the recognition of communicable diseases; and child abuse detection, prevention and reporting. – Providing, from among the above funds, adequate funding for infants and toddlers as necessary to meet federal requirements related to expenditures for quality activities for infant and toddler care. – Improving the monitoring of compliance with, and enforcement of, applicable state and local requirements. – Responding to Warm Line requests by providers and parents, including providing developmental and health screenings to SR program children.

The following tables show program expenditures in support of the SR and VPK programs during FY 2024-2025.

FY 2024-2025 School Readiness Quality Expenditures

<i>Quality and Enhancement Activities as described in s. 1002.89(4)(b), F.S.</i>					
Comprehensive Consumer Education	Provider Financial Supports	Training and Technical Assistance	Quality Activities for Infant and Toddler Care	Responding to Warm Line Requests	Statewide Total*
\$15,670,143	\$53,386,071	\$119,638,082	\$6,432,346	\$5,745,074	\$200,871,716

Source: DEL SR Expenditure Workbooks FY 2024-2025 data as of October 30, 2025; does not reflect final expenditure reconciliations.

*FDOE transferred \$12,717,116 to DCF for the remaining activity to improve the monitoring of compliance with, and enforcement of, applicable state and local requirements.

FY 2024-2025 Coalition and RCMA School Readiness Program Expenditures

Coalition	Total SR Expenditures w/ Cash Match	Direct Services Expenditure Percentage	Administrative Expenditure Percentage	Non-Direct Services Expenditure Percentage	Quality Expenditure Percentage (w/o Gold Seal)
ELC of Alachua County	\$14,993,120	70.83%	4.05%	6.65%	12.07%
ELC of the Big Bend Region	\$27,877,716	78.67%	4.32%	6.43%	8.41%
ELC of Brevard County	\$29,978,498	76.57%	2.01%	3.87%	9.45%
ELC of Broward County	\$130,370,465	75.09%	3.42%	5.46%	9.12%
ELC of Duval County	\$73,252,485	74.43%	2.73%	4.01%	15.13%
ELC of the Emerald Coast	\$10,380,560	79.70%	3.75%	5.86%	9.00%
ELC of Escambia County	\$18,222,531	77.55%	2.39%	5.44%	12.64%
ELC of Flagler and Volusia Counties	\$33,170,828	75.62%	3.02%	3.50%	13.34%
ELC of Florida's Gateway	\$12,930,314	75.92%	3.60%	6.32%	10.76%
ELC of Florida's Heartland	\$13,328,345	74.84%	4.67%	7.17%	9.51%
ELC of Hillsborough County	\$94,253,530	75.64%	2.80%	5.52%	9.61%
ELC of Indian River, Martin, and Okeechobee Counties (IRMO)	\$13,764,189	74.33%	2.04%	4.82%	12.08%
ELC of Lake County	\$16,300,751	77.47%	6.31%	4.12%	11.06%
ELC of Manatee County	\$22,158,454	74.77%	3.50%	3.81%	15.27%
ELC of Marion County	\$16,328,730	73.67%	4.04%	6.27%	12.30%
ELC of Miami-Dade/Monroe	\$158,469,216	74.03%	2.56%	5.57%	8.04%
ELC of the Nature Coast	\$13,469,510	72.17%	3.10%	6.81%	13.58%
ELC of North Florida	\$24,461,076	74.90%	2.81%	4.34%	13.15%
ELC of Northwest Florida	\$21,049,714	73.49%	3.20%	5.37%	14.79%
ELC of Orange County	\$91,883,593	74.61%	4.17%	4.16%	11.84%
ELC of Osceola County	\$22,936,144	72.23%	2.96%	3.25%	16.09%
ELC of Palm Beach County	\$123,383,840	71.20%	3.01%	4.39%	12.24%
ELC of Pasco and Hernando Counties	\$24,171,136	75.37%	3.46%	6.02%	9.31%
ELC of Pinellas County	\$44,633,562	73.86%	3.63%	5.12%	11.70%
ELC of Polk County	\$45,045,768	76.59%	3.51%	6.83%	12.24%
ELC of Santa Rosa County	\$6,417,684	78.00%	6.51%	5.82%	8.51%
ELC of Sarasota County	\$11,895,774	80.03%	2.03%	4.70%	10.68%
ELC of Seminole County	\$17,009,318	73.72%	3.50%	4.86%	9.23%
ELC of Southwest Florida	\$37,507,310	79.95%	3.76%	3.71%	8.84%
ELC of St. Lucie County	\$24,334,732	80.22%	3.09%	2.54%	8.73%
RCMA	\$15,728,454	67.45%	3.72%	8.43%	8.91%
Statewide	\$1,209,707,346	74.78%	3.25%	5.02%	10.91%

Source: DEL SR Expenditure Workbooks FY 2024-2025 data as of October 30, 2025; does not reflect final expenditure reconciliations.

FY 2024-2025 Coalition Voluntary Prekindergarten Program Expenditures

Coalition	Total VPK Expenditures	Direct Services Expenditures	Administrative Expenditures	Administrative Expenditure Percentage
ELC of Alachua County	\$4,187,482	\$4,021,622	\$165,860	3.96%
ELC of the Big Bend Region	\$6,638,868	\$6,545,283	\$93,585	1.41%
ELC of Brevard County	\$12,984,377	\$12,403,999	\$580,378	4.47%
ELC of Broward County	\$37,747,093	\$36,567,291	\$1,179,803	3.13%
ELC of Duval County	\$24,621,115	\$23,599,640	\$1,021,475	4.15%
ELC of the Emerald Coast	\$6,041,572	\$5,870,522	\$171,050	2.83%
ELC of Escambia County	\$4,854,543	\$4,739,380	\$115,163	2.37%
ELC of Flagler and Volusia Counties	\$11,081,832	\$10,554,126	\$527,706	4.76%
ELC of Florida's Gateway	\$2,864,612	\$2,789,667	\$74,945	2.62%
ELC of Florida's Heartland	\$4,441,546	\$4,258,400	\$183,146	4.12%
ELC of Hillsborough County	\$31,749,930	\$30,240,013	\$1,509,917	4.76%
ELC of Indian River, Martin, and Okeechobee Counties	\$6,764,112	\$6,563,550	\$200,562	2.97%
ELC of Lake County	\$7,545,573	\$7,186,524	\$359,049	4.76%
ELC of Manatee County	\$8,084,181	\$7,700,045	\$384,136	4.75%
ELC of Marion County	\$5,716,201	\$5,501,401	\$214,800	3.76%
ELC of Miami-Dade/Monroe	\$59,758,948	\$57,612,220	\$2,146,728	3.59%
ELC of the Nature Coast	\$5,150,429	\$4,903,558	\$246,870	4.79%
ELC of North Florida	\$17,381,812	\$16,626,160	\$755,652	4.35%
ELC of Northwest Florida	\$4,729,871	\$4,528,782	\$201,089	4.25%
ELC of Orange County	\$35,209,369	\$33,616,079	\$1,593,290	4.53%
ELC of Osceola County	\$9,851,335	\$9,399,556	\$451,779	4.59%
ELC of Palm Beach County	\$32,239,439	\$30,918,161	\$1,321,278	4.10%
ELC of Pasco and Hernando Counties	\$16,668,380	\$16,015,247	\$653,133	3.92%
ELC of Pinellas County	\$14,823,404	\$14,211,289	\$612,115	4.13%
ELC of Polk County	\$12,594,651	\$12,053,650	\$541,001	4.30%
ELC of Santa Rosa County	\$3,186,170	\$3,040,468	\$145,702	4.57%
ELC of Sarasota County	\$5,146,118	\$5,000,020	\$146,098	2.84%
ELC of Seminole County	\$11,331,558	\$10,880,685	\$450,873	3.98%
ELC of Southwest Florida*	\$23,638,071	\$22,820,532	\$817,539	3.46%
ELC of St. Lucie County	\$6,912,269	\$6,780,380	\$131,889	1.91%
Statewide	\$433,944,861	\$416,948,251	\$16,996,610	3.92%

Source: DEL VPK Expenditure Workbooks FY 2024-2025 data as of November 1, 2025; does not reflect final expenditure reconciliations.

*Includes Redlands Christian Migrant Association

Fraud Prevention

The Fraud Prevention Unit focuses on providing technical assistance, sharing best practices and partnering with other government agencies to identify potentially fraudulent activity.

The Fraud Prevention Unit reviewed and forwarded suspected fraud cases identified by the coalitions for the SR and VPK programs to the Florida Department of Financial Services Bureau of Public Assistance Fraud (BPAF) for criminal investigation. In turn, BPAF referred cases to the appropriate State Attorney’s Office for criminal prosecution.

During FY 2024-2025, the total amount of fraud referred to the State Attorney’s offices for review totaled \$216,359, and the restitution ordered for fraud referral cases filed by the State Attorney’s offices totaled \$10,614.05. In FY 2024-2025, DEL collected \$50,155.01 in restitution payments from recipient cases referred in FY 2024-2025 and prior fiscal years. Additionally, the ELCs collected \$79,985.69 from overpayments due to suspected fraud. No provider cases referred in FY 2024-2025 were closed as of year-end.

FY 2024-2025 Provider Fraud Case Referrals and Status	
SR/VPK providers DEL referred to BPAF for investigation.	6
Provider cases being screened by BPAF.	0
Provider cases BPAF did not investigate.	3
Provider cases pending assignment to a BPAF investigator.	1
Provider cases BPAF was actively investigating at year-end.	2

FY 2024-2025 Recipient Fraud Case Referrals and Status	
Number of SR recipients referred to BPAF for criminal investigation.	260
Number of SR recipient cases BPAF did not investigate.	133
Number of cases in screening status or pending assignment to a BPAF investigator.	113
Number of SR cases that BPAF is actively investigating, or a request was made for overpayment/over-issuance assistance.	10
Number of SR recipient cases sent to BPAF that are still awaiting status.	4

Source: Fraud Referral System as of July 1, 2025

EARLY LEARNING COALITIONS

The following summaries are examples of the types of activities ELCs use to effectively implement CCR&R, SR, VPK and early learning initiatives.

Comprehensive Consumer Education

Brevard County

Through a brand-new Soar By Four initiative, the ELC of Brevard County hosted 29 Launch into Literacy story times, reaching families in critical zip codes. These free events connected children with community partners and hands-on STEM/STEAM activities while exposing them to different occupations. The ELC also distributed 80 educational backpacks, 100 bedtime book bundles to encourage healthy routines and 53,760 books through Dolly Parton's Imagination Library and community outreach combined.

Flagler and Volusia Counties

The ELC of Flagler and Volusia Counties connected 4,768 families to resources through the Child Care Resource and Referral program and expanded outreach at 227 community events. Partnerships with libraries, health providers and community centers promoted early literacy, child development and parent engagement. Through Help Me Grow Florida, the ELC linked nearly 4,000 families to community-based services, ensuring parents had the tools and resources to best support their child's development.

Emerald Coast

The ELC of Emerald Coast partnered with the Boys and Girls Clubs to launch Care Crew, a summer program that taught younger prospective caregivers about safety, first aid, child development, nutrition and caregiving best practices. This inaugural program provided the community with 11 additional qualified caregivers while introducing a younger audience to the early learning career pathway and T.E.A.C.H. scholarship resources.

Provider Financial Supports

Duval County

The ELC of Duval County celebrated 20 years of the Guiding Stars of Duval, a quality rating and improvement system for child care providers. What began in 2005 with just 14 providers grew to 163 providers who are committed to higher standards, professional learning and continuous improvement. To support their dedication, the coalition distributed more than \$2.4 million in wage incentives to 670 qualifying educators.

Hillsborough County

The ELC of Hillsborough County provided more than \$9,850 in monetary incentives for professional learning and coaching completion under the Hillsborough Infant & Toddler Initiative. Additionally, \$37,875 in stipends were awarded to educators participating in the iSpy of Tampa Bay program. A significant \$231,000 was also provided as a Lost Wages Stipend to aid educators impacted by Hurricane Milton closures.

Northwest Florida

The ELC of Northwest Florida's Family Engagement and Staff Support Grants provided \$5,000 each to 60 child care businesses, totaling \$300,000, to build family engagement programs, assist staff and meet other needs. School-Aged Summer Learning Support Grants of \$1,500-\$5,000 were awarded to 39 providers, totaling \$111,500, to sustain and enrich summer learning for school-aged children.

Training and Technical Assistance

Manatee County

The Early Learning Taskforce (ELTF) is a collaborative initiative between the ELC of Manatee County, the school district and Step Up Suncoast/Head Start. The ELC collaborated with ELTF to host a Transition to Kindergarten Breakfast for infant, toddler, pre-K and kindergarten teachers along with key stakeholders to share strategies for a smooth transition into kindergarten. Each participant received a referral process flow chart used during role-play sessions to guide attendees through real-world scenarios involving children who may need additional support. The flow chart clarified steps to take and fostered meaningful discussion.

Pasco and Hernando Counties

The ELC of Pasco and Hernando Counties' Promise Institute served as a hub for professional growth in FY 2024-2025, with 3,503 participants in 217 trainings that delivered 344 hours of instruction designed to strengthen educators' knowledge, skills and practice. Additionally, 21 teachers mastered 188 goals using the coaching platform TORSH for observation, feedback and progress tracking.

Polk County

The ELC of Polk County's Training Incentives Program (TIP) celebrated its fifth year, offering SR and VPK practitioners the chance to enhance their early childhood education knowledge and earn a stipend. TIP participants completed 40 hours of professional learning, choosing

from 41 training options, and 178 participants logged more than 9,780 study hours to successfully master their coursework.

Quality Activities for Infant and Toddler Care

Emerald Coast

The ELC of the Emerald Coast partnered with Operation Childcare Project to establish *Homefront Helpers* in Okaloosa and Walton counties. This enabled individuals to become qualified caregivers, addressing the demand for infant and toddler care and care for non-traditional hours. Caregivers completed a comprehensive training program with both online and in-person components, covering Florida Department of Children and Families' training, CPR and First Aid certification. As a result, 24 caregivers were certified through the program to provide care to 140 families.

Indian River, Martin and Okeechobee Counties

The ELC's Early Childhood Specialists worked directly with teachers and directors to improve the quality of care for infants and toddlers. Teachers received training and materials for Baby Doll Circle Time, a research-based supplemental curriculum supporting regulation and connection in the youngest classrooms. Coalition staff also provided a series of Teachstone CLASS trainings specific to this age group, including Infant/Toddler CLASS Group Coaching, Infant Observer, Toddler Observer and Introduction to CLASS for both Infant and Toddler.

Sarasota County

The ELC of Sarasota County's 5th annual Storybook Street was a record-breaking success, selling out for the first time with more than 1,500 attendees. Focused on children birth to 5, the 2025 event saw a dramatic rise in infant and toddler participation. Families explored 20 local arts and science exhibits that brought books to life, and each family walked away with 20 new books. Over 8,000 books were distributed in two hours to build home libraries and foster early literacy skills.

Warm Line Services

Broward County

The ELC of Broward County's Warm Line Team continued offering its popular Behavior Bites live podcast, answering provider questions on challenging behaviors and short Behavior Bites Tidbits videos with best practices. The ELC also launched a Peer Support Specialist intervention, which helps parents navigate the application process for evaluations from Florida Diagnostic and Learning Resources System and Early Steps. In FY 2024-2025, the ELC saw that 73 percent of families of children referred to services by a Warm Line Specialist

followed through with their referral. This is a significant increase from 61 percent the prior year.

Florida's Gateway

The ELC of Florida's Gateway created a Mobility Lending Library, a dynamic resource designed to empower children with special needs by promoting accessibility, mobility and holistic development. This curated collection of equipment is tailored to support children in achieving greater independence within their environment while also aligning with Applied Behavior Analysis protocols. Though these resources are not intended to replace professional therapies or medical interventions, they provide valuable assistance in meeting the unique needs of children in care.

Miami-Dade/Monroe Counties

The ELC of Miami-Dade/Monroe provided more than 21,000 developmental screenings, with 5,334 children identified for follow-up and 2,205 referred for further evaluation. The ELC's Warm Line also responded to 3,659 parent and provider requests, addressing developmental, behavioral and emotional needs.

Appendix - Percentage of Children in School Readiness Program Compared to Children in Poverty by Early Learning Coalition

Percent of Eligible Children in School Readiness Program Paid Enrollments* by Early Learning Coalition: FY 2024-2025

Early Learning Coalition/RCMA	School Readiness Enrollments Ages 0-4*	Number of Children Ages 0-4 Below 150 Percent of Federal Poverty Level	Percent of Children Ages 0-4 Compared to Number Below 150 Percent of Federal Poverty Level
State	114,563	345,616	33%
ELC of Alachua County	1,462	3,864	38%
ELC of Brevard County	3,121	7,803	40%
ELC of Broward County	10,890	29,157	37%
ELC of Duval County	7,993	21,404	37%
ELC of Escambia County	1,863	6,599	28%
ELC of Flagler & Volusia Counties	3,648	9,351	39%
ELC of Florida's Gateway	1,138	3,042	37%
ELC of Florida's Heartland	1,202	5,397	22%
ELC of Hillsborough County	9,072	26,195	35%
ELC of IRMO Counties	1,332	4,901	27%
ELC of Lake County	2,057	5,964	34%
ELC of Manatee County	2,144	6,456	33%
ELC of Marion County	1,699	7,243	23%
ELC of Miami-Dade/Monroe Counties	12,951	45,249	29%
ELC of North Florida	2,819	9,284	30%
ELC of Northwest Florida	2,148	5,925	36%
ELC of Orange County	8,396	25,279	33%
ELC of Osceola County	2,370	7,271	33%
ELC of Palm Beach County	9,344	20,494	46%
ELC of Pasco and Hernando Counties	3,011	11,504	26%
ELC of Pinellas County	4,308	10,837	40%
ELC of Polk County	4,549	19,129	24%
ELC of Santa Rosa County	586	2,904	20%
ELC of Sarasota County	1,336	3,400	39%
ELC of Seminole County	1,453	5,072	29%
ELC of Southwest Florida	4,192	18,024	23%
ELC of St. Lucie County	2,714	6,082	45%
ELC of the Big Bend Region	3,175	7,665	41%
ELC of the Emerald Coast	1,179	5,265	22%
ELC of the Nature Coast	1,284	4,856	26%
Redlands Christian Migrant Association (RCMA)**	1,127	NA	NA

Sources: Population data from the Florida Office of Economic and Demographic Research, August 7, 2025.

Source: Division of Early Learning, EFS Modernization School Readiness enrollment data.

* School Readiness paid enrollments include infants, toddlers, 2-year-olds, preschool 3-year-olds, and 4-year-olds.

**RCMA serves children in multiple counties covered by Early Learning Coalitions.

The criteria for the traditional SR program includes 1) Gross income must be at or below 150 percent of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) for initial eligibility and at or below 85 percent of the State Median Income (SMI) for continued eligibility; 2)

Parent(s)/guardian(s) must work or participate in an educational activity such as attending college or trade school at least 20 hours per week; and 3) Families must pay a copayment for child care based on income and family size.

DEL is committed to ensuring Florida's early care and education providers and teachers have access to the best resources and support to serve Florida's children and families.

