



ANNUAL REPORT FY 07.08

Helping Children Succeed...

INTRODUCTION

A MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR & EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

It is our pleasure to present the Early Learning Coalition of Brevard's Fiscal Year 2007.08 Annual Report. The Coalition has spent this past year moving forward to improve the quality of early care and education opportunities in Brevard County to ensure children enter school ready to learn.

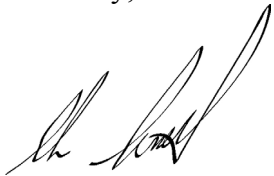
Daily operations and business is conducted by a dedicated team of 45 full-time and 3 part-time staff working diligently to ensure the programs and services we fund are of the highest quality while maintaining accountability to ensure that school readiness and voluntary pre-kindergarten funds are well-invested in our community and have the desired impact of preparing children for school.

The Coalition experienced tremendous growth during Fiscal Year 2007.08 with the change in service delivery for School Readiness and Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten programs. As of January 1, 2008 the Coalition brought many services previously contracted to an outside agency in-house resulting in cost savings and streamlined services.

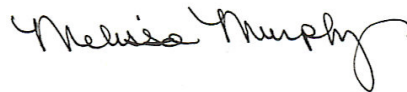
While much has been accomplished this past year, there is much more to be achieved. We must continue efforts to secure local match funding to draw down School Readiness funding earmarked for Brevard County families at the Federal Level and engage the business community as active partners in all School Readiness efforts. We must continue to look for avenues to support child care providers in retaining staff and enhancing quality through collaborative partnerships and training opportunities.

We thank our sub-contractors, child care providers, board members and various other organizations and stakeholders throughout the community who have and continue to support the Coalition by partnering to ensure success in serving the children of Brevard County.

Sincerely,



Shannon Smithwick, Chair



Melissa Murphy, Executive Director



HISTORY:

In May 1999, Florida Legislation for the School Readiness Program – Florida Statute 411 was passed authorizing the establishment of local School Readiness Coalitions. During this same time period, community members began to explore the development of the local School Readiness Coalition under the direction of United Way. In August 1999, the group approved by-laws establishing the Brevard School Readiness Coalition. In December of the same year, the group submitted an application to the Florida Partnership for School Readiness to be the local School Readiness Coalition. The application was approved in January 2000 and a planning grant was provided to assist the Coalition in the development of the initial service delivery plan.

On May 8, 2000, the Brevard School Readiness Coalition became incorporated and in June 2000, the initial service delivery plan received conditional approval from the Florida Partnership. As part of the service delivery plan, the Brevard School Readiness Coalition entered into a Shared Resources Model with the Healthy Start Coalition of Brevard County, Inc. for Administrative and Fiscal Agent Services effective November 2000.

On July 1, 2001, the Brevard School Readiness Coalition assumed full allocation authority by executing contracts with the Florida Partnership and local contracted organizations.

On January 2, 2005 Governor Bush signed House Bill 1A into law, creating the Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten (VPK) Program (F.S. Chapter 1002, Part V). The VPK Program was implemented statewide in July and August 2005. The statute re-established School Readiness Coalitions as Early Learning Coalitions, requiring each coalition to serve at least 2,000 children per month and reduced the number of Coalitions statewide to thirty-one (31). In addition, the statute identified the composition of each Early Learning Coalition Board and provided that the Governor appoint a chair and two (2) other members to the Coalition who meet AWI/OEL qualifications as private-sector business members.

With the resulting growth of the Coalition due to VPK, the Board agreed to a six month transition period with the Coalition's contracted entity, the Healthy Start Coalition of Brevard County for Administrative and Fiscal Services. During this time, the Coalition hired staff, secured office space and became fully operational as its own entity on January 1, 2006.

During FY 06.07 the Coalition implemented a new assessment tool for monitoring of quality services by child care providers, the Environment Rating Scales. All providers were trained on the rating scales and received copies of each tool and accompanying materials. Use of this tool provided a standardized method of assessing quality within each child care facility. Additionally, the Coalition began processing School Readiness and Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten provider agreements in-house. This allowed additional oversight and coordination between child care providers and the Coalition's contracted service providers.

In an effort to establish administrative cost savings and streamline services, the Board of Directors unanimously approved the Coalition to provide direct services for School Readiness and Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten programs in house effective January 1, 2008. This included the provision of child eligibility, enrollment, and screening and assessment services as well as the processing of attendance and provider payments. These services were previously contracted to the Child Care Association of Brevard.

MISSION:

The mission of the Early Learning Coalition of Brevard County, Inc. is to provide leadership and oversight for School Readiness and Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten Programs ensuring that children have the opportunity to benefit from the quality of early learning environments.

VISION:

Brevard children will enter school prepared to experience educational success.

PROGRAMS:

Resource and Referral and Simplified-Point-Of-Entry:

Resource and Referral (R&R): Child Care Resource and Referral serves as the primary source for parents, child care providers, businesses and the community to obtain information on child care programs that best meet their needs. Information is provided on identifying specific child care needs, choosing quality child care, training, and other options for selecting early childhood education programs.

R&R is an informational service which does not license, endorse, nor recommend any type of early care and education provider over another. Trained staff suggests that parents visit several programs to determine which one best serves the needs of their family. Parents are encouraged to visit providers before a decision is made to place their child. The R&R network maintains the only comprehensive, statewide database of child care, school readiness and school age programs and service providers.

Resource and Referral's trained parent counselors can identify area centers, family child care homes, after school programs, head start programs, preschools, faith-based programs and summer camps that meet the needs of both parent and child. Referrals can be provided based on many different criteria including: teacher credentials, location, ages, special programs, hours of operation and availability through a database of information. Because the information is updated regularly, the most current information is available.

Simplified Point of Entry: Parents are able to complete the initial application for services by phone or in person at one of the Early Learning Coalition offices. Additionally, parents may utilize an online Simplified Point of Entry system to apply for services. Access to the Simplified Point of Entry system is maintained throughout the county. All entries are coordinated and managed by the Coalition. Trained staff follows up on all requests, interview parents regarding family needs and obtain sufficient evidence to determine eligibility for services. The Coalition identifies eligible children and maintains a unified waiting list for School Readiness eligible children.

Overview of Program Components:

- a. **School Readiness Program:** For the first six (6) months of FY 07.08, the Child Care Association of Brevard County and Devereux Florida were contracted to administer services for the School Readiness Program. Effective January 1, 2008 the Coalition themselves directly provided all services previously contracted to the Child Care Association. All agencies are

responsible for ensuring high quality, comprehensive and developmentally appropriate child care and early childhood related services are available to prepare children for success in Kindergarten. The following are some of the services provided through the Coalition: eligibility determination and enrollment of children in early education and child care programs; case management for protective services children through Project Safety Net; developmental screenings and assessments; and processing of payments to child care providers.

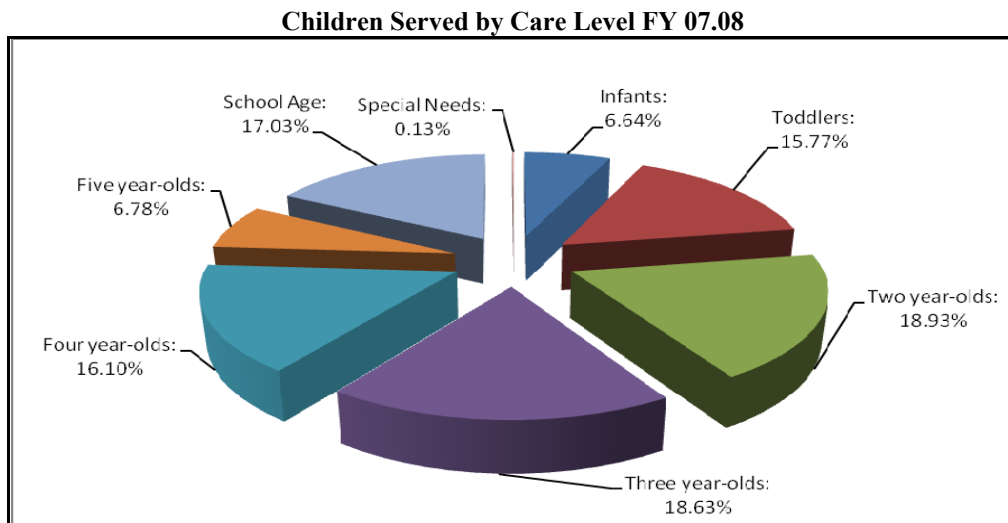
Devereux Florida is responsible for resource and referral services, inclusion services, monitoring of School Readiness providers to ensure quality services utilizing the Environment Rating Scales and provider professional development.

As of June 2008, Brevard County had two hundred and eighty (280) child care providers licensed with the local licensing agency (Environmental Health). This included 175 licensed child care centers, 76 licensed family child care homes and 9 licensed large family child care homes. Brevard County does not recognize registered family child care homes. The Brevard County Commission requires all family day care homes be licensed, operated and subject to enforcement pursuant to F.S. §§ 402.301--402.3 19, Chapter 65C-20, Florida Administrative Code and any subsequent amendments.

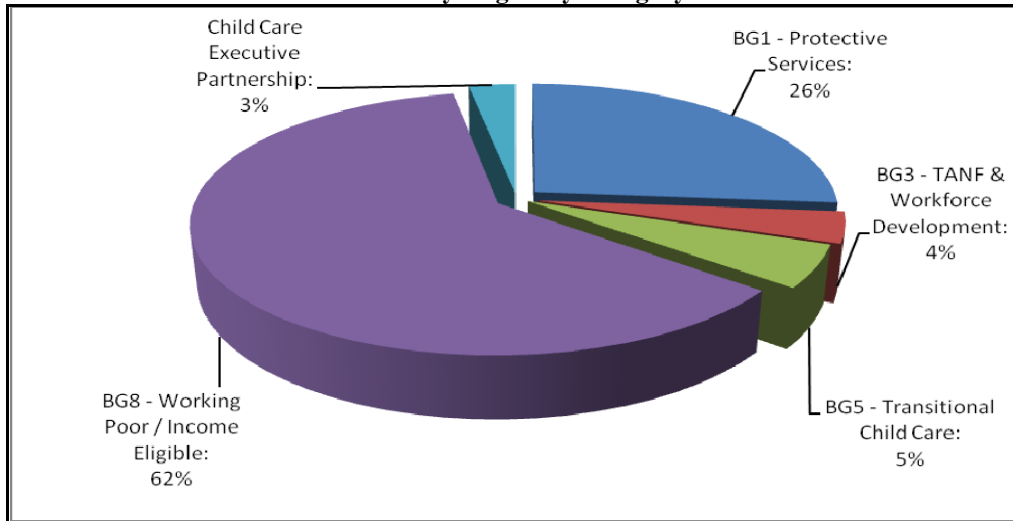
All School Readiness contracted centers, family child care homes, faith based and informal providers were monitored by Devereux during FY 07.08 utilizing the Environment Rating Scales.

Forty-eight (48) child care facilities, one (1) family child care home and forty-four (44) school based facilities were identified as “Gold Seal” by the Department of Children and Families as of June 30, 2008.

Number of Unduplicated Children Served: During FY 07.08 a total of 6,949 unduplicated children were served in School Readiness programs. The following charts identify the average percent of children served in School Readiness programs for FY 07.08 by age (care level) and eligibility category. On average, 4,300 children were served each month during FY 07.08.



Children Served by Eligibility Category FY 07.08

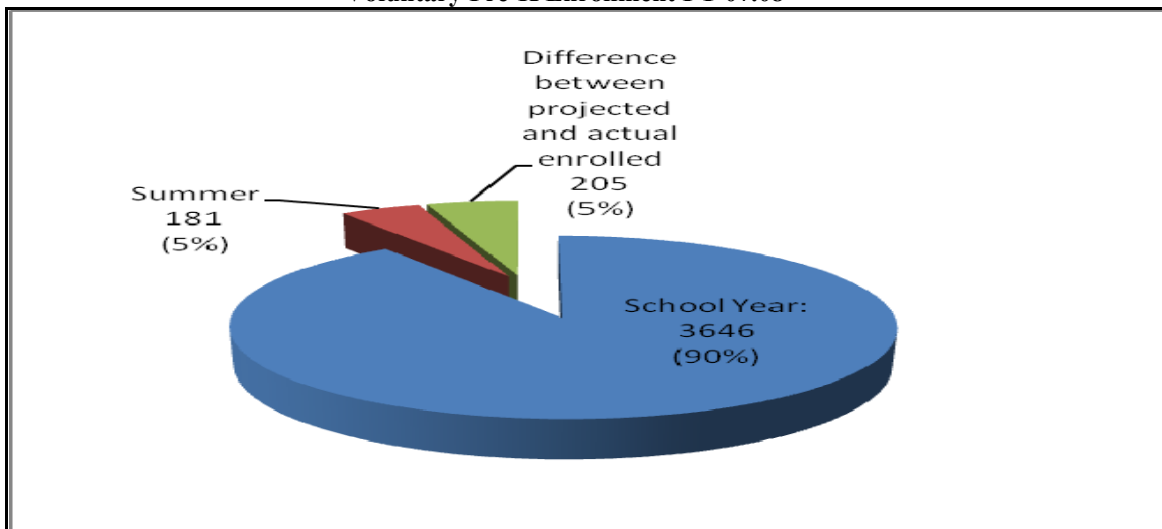


- b. **Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten Program (VPK):** Each child residing in Florida who has reached 4 years of age on or before September 1st of the current school year is eligible for VPK. The program, designed to enhance a child's ability to make progress in the development of language and cognitive capabilities through education in basic skills, has had continued success in Brevard during year three of implementation.

During School Year 07.08, 3,646 children participated at one of 156 approved VPK sites (an increase of 22 providers from FY 06.07). Approved providers included: 97 private child care facilities, 29 faith-based sites and 30 public schools. In addition, 181 children attended the Summer VPK Program offered at one of 18 approved sites. This included 5 public schools, 2 faith-based sites and 11 private providers.

Enrollment in the school year and summer programs resulted in a total of 3,827 children participating in VPK this past year representing 95% of the state's projected enrollment for Brevard County. An 11% increase in enrollment (373 children) was seen from FY 06.07.

Voluntary Pre-K Enrollment FY 07.08



This fiscal year, VPK Providers received their Readiness Rate for the 2006.07 VPK Program Year. Providers whose readiness rate is at or below the bottom 15% of all providers' readiness rates are identified by the Department of Education as Low Performing. Sixteen providers (3 public schools, 13 private providers including 1 family child care provider) received this designation in Brevard for 2006.07. All low performing providers completed improvement plans and as a result received extra supports including technical assistance, curriculum materials and resources.

VPK Providers continued to learn more about the Department of Education Performance Standards for VPK. Several trainings were provided to VPK teachers on the VPK Standards, providing guidelines on what children should know and be able to do at the end of the VPK year. Trainings were well attended with each provider receiving a copy of the Standards to take home.

c. Quality Initiatives/Special Programs: *The Coalition offered the following Quality Initiatives during FY 07.08:*

✓ **Florida First Start Program**

The Brevard County School District administers the Florida First Start Program. This family literacy program provides education and support services to families with children age birth through four years old in the surrounding areas of the Endeavor and Cambridge Elementary Schools as well as the Astronaut, Cocoa, Eau Gallie, and Palm Bay High School Teen Age Parent Programs. In addition to home visits, a parent resource center is provided where weekly parent-child activities are offered. Parent group meetings and developmental and health screenings are also offered as part of this program.

In FY 07.08, ninety-five (95) children were served in the Florida First Start Program.

✓ **Early Education Training and Support**

Devereux Florida provides comprehensive School Readiness education and training services for child care providers, teachers, and families. These services are offered at no cost to local providers and families each year to enhance the cognitive, social, emotional and physical development of children residing in Brevard County. Devereux provides training on assessments, screening tools and performance standards required by the Agency for Workforce Innovation / Office of Early Learning and the Coalition. School Readiness child care providers are eligible to receive technical assistance and mentoring support, early education and support training, access to a resource library, classroom needs assessments and materials to improve quality within their program.

Over fifty (50) free training opportunities were offered in FY 07.08 in which over 1,400 participants attended throughout the county. Training topics included, but were not limited to the following topics: Coalition approved curricula, character development, and assessment tools, Environment Rating Scales, Florida School Readiness Standards and Inclusion.

Major Program Changes or Initiatives:

School Readiness: Up through December 2007, the Coalition contracted with the Child Care Association (CCA) to provide School Readiness and Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten (VPK) services. This included:

- Child eligibility and enrollment for child care subsidies and VPK
- School Readiness attendance processing and reimbursement
- Child Care Purchasing Pool
- Child screening (hearing, vision, dental, and developmental)

However due to many reasons including contractual and financial concerns, the Board of Directors approved bringing these services in house as of January 1, 2008. By providing services directly, the Coalition expected to save approximately \$325,000 annually in administrative costs.

With this change the Coalition expanded from fourteen staff at one central location to forty-eight staff at five locations. This change also required the Coalition to begin securing local match for School Readiness services; previously this responsibility was contracted to the Child Care Association.



Program Performance – Number and % of Children “Ready for School”: Based on the fall 2007 FLKRS (Florida Kindergarten Readiness Screening) data, 86% of children entering kindergarten were ready to learn (based on the Early Childhood Observation System {ECHOS} assessment). A decrease of 1% in scores on the ECHOS assessment was seen from the prior year (the first year using the ECHOS as an assessment tool).

When reviewing the DIBELS (Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills) data, 70% of kindergarten students scored “above average” or “low risk” in the sub-scale “Initial Sounds”. This was an increase of 2% from the prior year. 75% of children entering kindergarten scored “above average” or “low risk” in the sub-scale “Letter Naming”; an increase of 2% from the prior year. Additional information on the FLKRS can be found at www.fldoe.org/earlylearning.

ANALYSIS

Special Initiatives: *The following is a listing of activities / initiatives for FY 07.08:*

- ✓ Education resources and materials were offered to child care providers to enhance the quality of childcare programs upon completion of their annual on-site assessment utilizing the Environment Rating Scales. Each provider worked with a Technical Assistance Mentor to select materials to enhance their program.
- ✓ Over fifty (50) free training opportunities were offered in which over 1,400 participants attended throughout the county. Training topics included, but were not limited to the following topics: Coalition approved curricula, character development, and assessment tools, Environment Rating Scales, Florida School Readiness Standards and Inclusion. The Coalition's contracted training provider (Devereux) is an Authorized Provider of CEU's through the International Association of Continuing Education and Training (IACET). Over 120 CEU's were processed this fiscal year.
- ✓ The Coalition worked with Brevard Community College to offer scholarships to over 30 students allowing teachers to complete their Florida Child Care Professional Certificate and renew Director's Credentials.
- ✓ Online training was made available as another avenue for teachers to obtain continuing education units. All courses were available in English and Spanish. Hours of professional development accrued could be converted to continuing education units.
- ✓ The Coalition website (www.elcbrevard.org) continues to be a useful tool acting as a one-stop resource for both parents and providers.
- ✓ The Coalition hosted its annual provider meeting at the Brevard Zoo recognizing Provider Appreciation Day with over 150 teachers and directors attending.
- ✓ "Take it on the Road" programs such as the "Music and Movement" continues to provide an opportunity to work with owners, directors and teachers at their location to assess, mentor and implement programs which assist teachers in providing the highest quality learning opportunities possible to the children they serve.
- ✓ VPK teachers participated in the PERKS (Partners in Education and Research for Kindergarten Success) program. Funded by the Coalition, this program provided VPK teachers with a CDA or higher, opportunities to enroll in 2 college level courses towards an associates degree. Each PERKS participant received technical assistance from a PERKS Technical Assistance Specialist on a regular basis.
- ✓ The Coalition funded the Child Care WAGES[®] FLORIDA Project, which aims to improve child care quality by reducing turnover and encouraging the continued education of early childhood teachers. \$50,000 was expensed during FY 07.08 to

provide education-based salary supplements to early childhood teachers working with children ages birth to five.

- ✓ The Coalition hosted a Family Expo on May 17, 2008. The Expo was designed as an opportunity for families and their children to enjoy a fun-filled day with face painting, storytelling and music along with opportunities to have hearing and vision screenings conducted, register for VPK and meet local child care providers and community agencies. Nearly 500 people attended the event.



- ✓ In collaboration with the Coalition, local child care providers organized and kicked off the “Association for Child Care Professionals”. The Association was organized as an arena for providers to network with others, increase professional development opportunities for staff and establish cost savings for materials and services frequently used.

Program Issues:

- ✓ Waiting list: As of June 30, 2008, the Coalition had a waiting list of over 1,200 children for School Readiness services. The Coalition has been enrolling from the waiting list since January 2008 providing over 800 children the opportunity to enroll in School Readiness programs. Once enrollment began in January the Coalition experienced an influx of families inquiring about the waiting list.
- ✓ Local Match: Due to the transition of services previously contracted to the Child Care Association on January 1, 2008 the Coalition had a difficult time securing local match funds for the remainder of the fiscal year. Match agreements had previously been secured by the Association with funders through June 30, 2008 or beyond and were non-transferrable. The Coalition diligently worked to secure grant funds and in-kind donations but still fell short of the annual match requirement. On a positive note, the Coalition did not see a reduction in funding resulting from insufficient local match funds.

FISCAL

Financial Analysis 07.08:

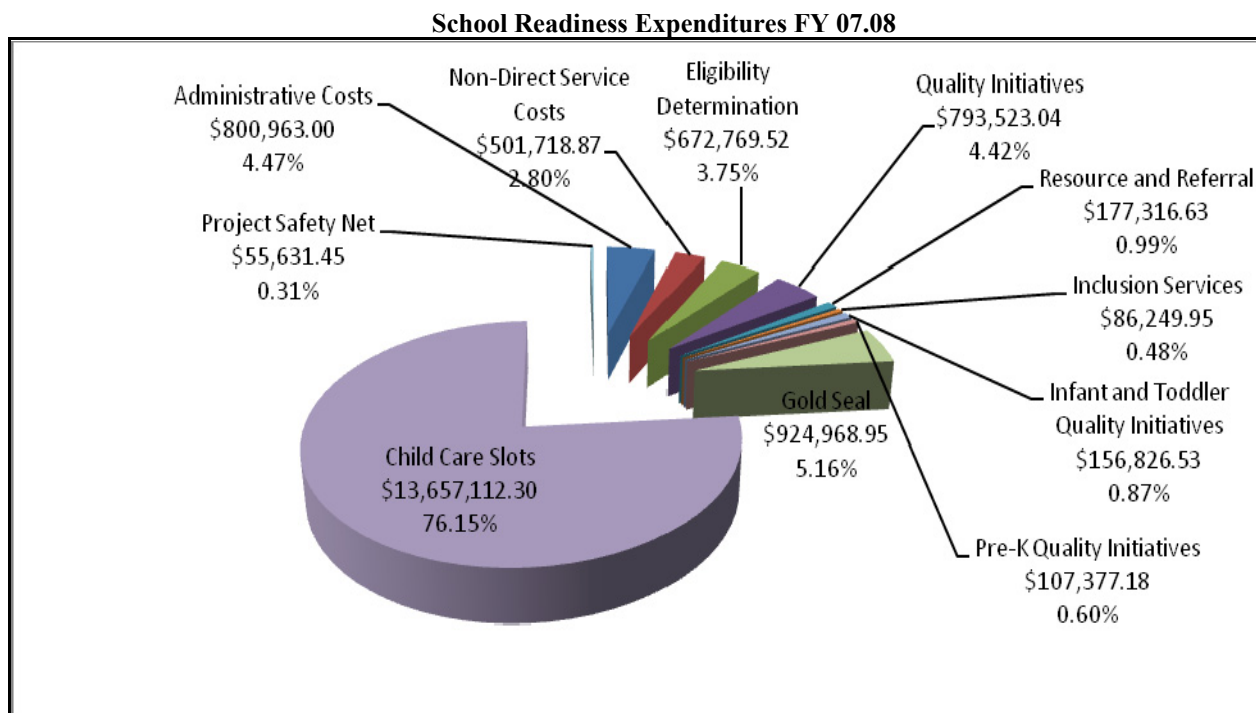
School Readiness:

The Early Learning Coalition of Brevard initially received a total grant award of \$19,442,000.00 for School Readiness programs. This included \$374,999.00 for the Child Care Executive Partnership Program (CCEP). In February 2008, as a result of Marjorie Olsen Foundation and Brevard County Community Action Team ceasing participation in the CCEP program \$30,000.00 was de-obligated in

CCEP funds. In May 2008, the Coalition de-obligated \$350,000 due to under utilization of School Readiness direct service dollars in an effort to offset projected statewide federal funding reductions for FY 07.08. This brought the total grant award for FY 07.08 to \$18,717,001.00 for School Readiness and \$344,999.00 in CCEP funds.

Matching funds were provided through a variety of sources to the Coalition’s contracted agency for child care enrollment (Child Care Association) through December 2007 including, but not limited to the United Way of Brevard, Brevard County, local cities and businesses. Additional matching funds were provided through in-kind donations to the Coalition by local businesses.

- 95.82% of the total School Readiness grant award was expended during Fiscal Year 07.08.
- Over 81% of the grant award was spent on subsidized child care services (slots); this includes 5.16% in Gold Seal funding to accredited providers. This is an overall increase of more than 2% spent on direct child care services from FY 06.07.
- Coalition administrative expenditures accounted for 3.65% of the total funding received for School Readiness; Coalition non-direct services accounted for 2.83% of the total funding received. When adding administrative and non-direct service expenditures for contracted service providers, the overall total is 11% of the award (note: a total of 19% is allowed by the grant award).

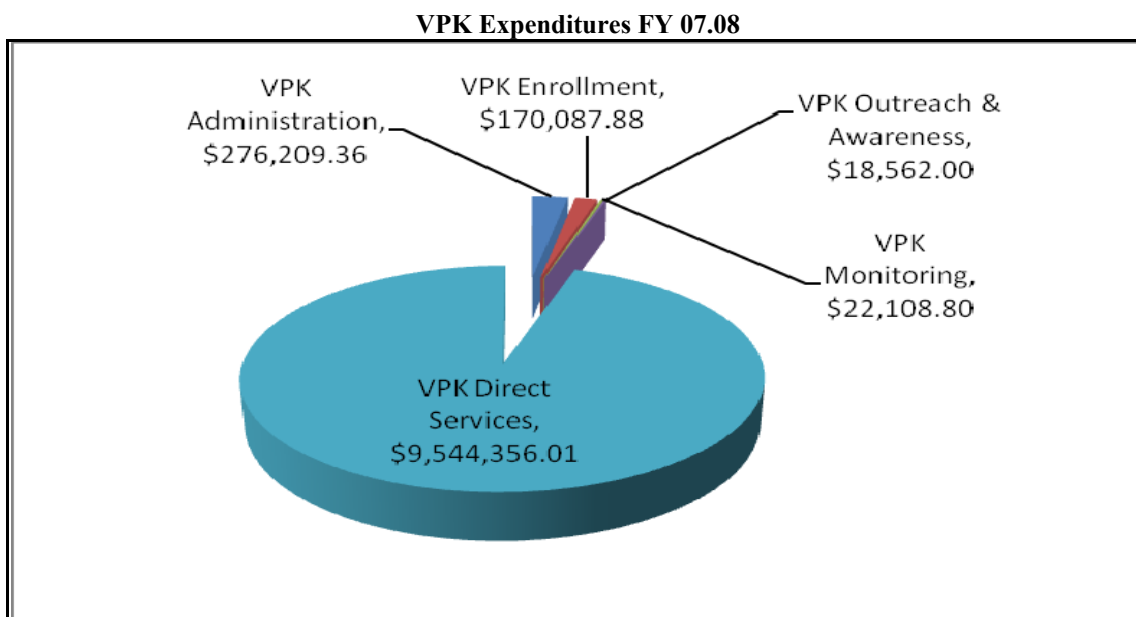


Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten:

The Early Learning Coalition of Brevard receives Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten (VPK) funds on a reimbursement basis for the number of children served. The Coalition receives 5% in addition to the reimbursement for services to perform administrative and non-direct service functions such as determining provider and child eligibility, processing of attendance sheets and provider payments.

The Coalition receives additional funding for the purpose of monitoring VPK providers and providing local outreach and awareness.

During FY 07.08, the Coalition successfully enrolled 3,827 children in the school year and summer VPK programs. This represented 95% of the state's projections for VPK enrollment in Brevard. Based on enrollment, a total of \$9,544,356.01 was paid out to VPK providers for services provided in FY 07.08; \$446,297.27 was utilized for VPK administrative and enrollment functions shared between the Coalition and its contracted service providers for administrative and enrollment services. The full amount of dollars allocated for VPK provider monitoring and outreach and awareness was utilized (\$40,493.00).



Events which affected the financial management and expenditures within the Coalition, if applicable:

Upon taking services in-house the Coalition conducted record reviews and analysis of families enrolled in School Readiness services. At that time, the Coalition recognized a pattern of protective services referrals being provided for periods extending beyond a protective services case being open. In addition, 6 - month referrals were provided for families under protective investigation. Upon further research and speaking to staff at appropriate agencies clarifications were made on the process of issuing referrals for protective service cases. As cases must be closed under protective investigation or referred for protective supervision within 2 months, referrals would now be provided for an initial period of two months. Agencies providing referrals are now required to submit documentation indicating a case is open in order to submit a referral of any type. With these changes a drastic reduction in the amount of referrals for services under protective services was realized (a 35% decrease in enrollment of protective service children between January and June 2008).

This decrease in enrollment coupled with natural attrition resulted in under utilization of direct service dollars for FY 07.08. On a positive note, the Coalition was able to expedite enrollment from the waiting list providing over 800 children the opportunity to enroll in School Readiness programs.

SUMMARY

Making a Difference in the Lives of Children and Early Education and Child Care Providers

The Early Learning Coalition of Brevard County strives to ensure that children have access to quality care and that Early Education and Child Care Providers have the education, tools and resources needed for their profession. As a result, ongoing trainings, mentoring, resource materials and scholarships were available to providers. Newsletters and community meetings were held for parent education. Board membership expanded and a Child Care Provider Association was established. Lastly, the Coalition is proud to have continued building community partnerships to assist parents in locating affordable childcare.

“I feel that the Coalition staff is really working towards improving quality programs and that decisions are always made in the best interest of the children. I congratulate them on taking bold steps to be fiscally responsible and to find ways to improve not just the numbers served but the quality served. I am always able to approach staff and find that everyone is open to thinking outside the box and find ways to better serve the clients.” *Anonymous – contractor survey FY 07.08*

“I’ve been very grateful for this program since my son was 3 months old, as a single mom to be able to work and have the assistance without any child support....has been a God send. At times I feel overwhelmed being a single mom and I worry I don't see things that may or may not be right as far as developmental stages for him.” *Anonymous – parent survey FY 07.08*

“I do believe that you are doing a great job. The organization is very professional. Each staff person I have worked with has been a tremendous help.” *Anonymous – provider survey FY 07.08*

“The Florida First Start Program has helped me by talking to me before my son was born and afterwards to help me learn new ways to progress my sons learning and by teaching me ways to become a better father.” *Parent – Florida First Start*

“My Florida First Start home visitor has helped me to read more to my child and do more things with him and even put baby music on in my car to teach him good words instead of what teen parents listen to.” *Parent – Teenage Parent Program*

“I learned that reading to your child is crucial for their language. That you should treat your child with respect and love them eternally.” *Parent – Florida First Start*

As you can see, the Coalition is *making a difference* in the lives of individuals who will soon be shaping the lives of our future, the children of Brevard.