

2006-2007 Fiscal Year Annual Report

Message from the Chairman of the Board

The past year brought many changes and exciting opportunities to the Coalition. I am proud and honored to have been a part of the new initiatives which came into fruition due to the hard work of our dedicated board members and staff.

September 2006 marked the official launch of the Strokes of Genius grant project. Twenty child care centers were chosen to participate in this three year program aimed at increasing the kindergarten readiness of a projected 2,200 Seminole County children. Participants received developmentally appropriate equipment for use in classrooms and playgrounds, character development curriculum, vision and hearing screenings and an opportunity to consult regularly with an experienced and degreed child care professional.

Over 3,600 Seminole County four year olds participated in the second year of the Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) program. VPK providers worked side by side with Coalition and 4C staff to give our community's children every advantage for success in school and in life. In May 2007 the Coalition was excited to roll out the "VPK Summer Play" initiative which provided every graduate of the 540 hour school year program with a summer activity calendar and a backpack full of supplies to help encourage continued growth. This initiative provided parents with the tools necessary to continue the VPK experience throughout the three-month summer break; keeping the skills learned during the year sharp for Kindergarten.

And the providers' hard work shows, Seminole County scored as one of the best in the state on the 2005-2006 VPK Readiness Rates. The Department of Education looked at the impact of the VPK program in increasing scores on the Florida Kindergarten Readiness Screener (FLKRS) test which is given to all children during the first 30 days of kindergarten.

The following report highlights these and the many more successes of our 2006-2007 fiscal year. As always, we give our sincerest thanks and appreciation to our faithful supporters. We welcome comments and questions from old and new friends alike.

Mike Gotschall
Chairman of the Board



History of the Coalition

Incorporated in June 2000, the Early Learning Coalition is recognized by the State of Florida as the local policy body, under Florida Statute, responsible for overseeing early care and education services in Seminole County. Comprised of a board of 20 community leaders, the Coalition works collaboratively with its key service broker (4C of Central Florida) and a network of over 300 public and private providers to ensure children receive high quality, developmentally appropriate services grounded in the skills needed to enter school ready to learn. To the extent resources allow, the Coalition also funds before and after school services for children under the age of 13.

Vision and Mission Statement

The vision of the Early Learning Coalition of Seminole is for every Seminole County child to enter school ready and eager to learn.

Our mission is to be the recognized authority in Seminole County for information regarding high quality school readiness and child care services which allow parents to make informed choices when selecting childcare providers. We carry out our mission through collaborative partnerships with early education and care professionals and concerned community leaders to:

- ◇ enhance the quality of school readiness services in Seminole County
- ◇ promote community awareness of critical factors regarding early learning
- ◇ provide scholarships for eligible low income children to attend child care centers
- ◇ Increase participation in the Voluntary Prekindergarten program available to all four year olds in Seminole County.

What does the Early Learning Coalition of Seminole do?



Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) -The Coalition funds a professionally staffed, comprehensive database of area childcare providers. Referrals are available to any parent in need of childcare services, CCR&R allows parents to customize their childcare provider search and access information regarding factors associated with quality care.

Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) - VPK is a program instituted by state legislature providing two options; 540 hours of instruction during the school year or 300 hours of instruction during the summer. The program is available to all 4 years who are residents of the State of Florida at no charge. The Coalition oversees funding for this program in

contracts for child enrollment and related services.

Simplified Point of Entry and Subsidized Childcare Wait List - The Coalition offers a “one stop shop” for parents seeking childcare subsidies. While many of our providers offer preliminary screening intended to identify potential low income families, the Coalition funds a single official access point for all families seeking financial subsidies. After a family is determined eligible, qualifying children are placed on a waitlist according to Coalition priority. Once funding is available, parents of priority children are contacted.



What does the Early Learning Coalition of Seminole do?



Eligibility Determination for Childcare Subsidies and Childcare Slot Budget Forecasting - a process intended to ensure public resources are invested according to state and federal law. Prior to receiving a voucher, all families must present documentation to substantiate income, child age, and work status. A 50% random sample is conducted monthly, to ensure continued eligibility. A monthly forecast is presented and managed by the Coalition Executive Director under the supervision of the Coalition's Finance Committee to ensure full utilization of Coalition resources.

Childcare Provider Recruitment, Provider Agreement Management, Program Evaluation, and Technical Assistance - the process used to ensure adequate availability of childcare options and quality. The Coalition works with both start-up and established providers to expand supply when demand exceeds available openings. Those providers willing to accept Coalition subsidies sign an agreement outlining specific quality indicators, receive an on-site program review, and can access technical assistance to enhance childcare services.

Childcare Provider Mini-grants, Training/Conferences/Scholarships and Incentives - used to advance provider credentials, promote accreditation, and share best practices. When funding is available the Coalition releases applications for small grants to support provider-directed projects and conference scholarships, as well as hosting conferences for the provider network throughout the year. The Coalition also provides curriculum and training for providers at no charge. These are open to any provider in Seminole County, although the Coalition gives special consideration to those accepting Coalition-funded children.

Special Initiatives

- ◆ Over 200 providers attended the second annual FLKRS (Florida Kindergarten Readiness Screener) conference which focused on preparing children ages birth through five for Kindergarten.
- ◆ The Coalition was a key sponsor and participant in the Child Abuse Prevention Task Force Safety Fair in October 2006. Over 3000 Seminole County families were in attendance.
- ◆ For the third year in a row, the Coalition continued the curriculum training initiative. Nearly 300 teachers and assistant teachers participated and received curriculum materials.
- ◆ Phase II of the Workforce Study provided further insight into training and professional development in the industry in Seminole County. Over 61.5% of providers participated and results show that low pay and lack of benefits are the major factors driving high turnover rates.
- ◆ Through a partnership with Seminole County Emergency Services over 30 providers participated in a hands on emergency preparedness workshop.



Providers learned how to use fire extinguishers at the Emergency Preparedness Training.

Special Initiatives (Continued)

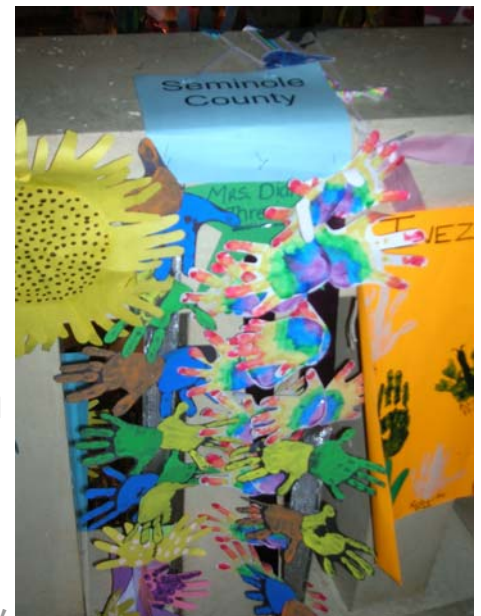


Board Chair Mike Gotschall and School Board Members Jeanne Morris and Gary Earl cut the ribbon at the Strokes of Genius Launching Ceremony on September 18, 2006.

- ◆ The Coalition teamed up with Seminole Community College to offer offering scholarships students studying in early childhood education programs. Through the SCC foundation, the initial \$10,000 from the Coalition was matched for a grand total of \$20,000 invested in this initiative.
- ◆ For the third consecutive year, the Coalition partnered with Seminole Community College to bring nationally renowned speakers to Seminole County with the Second Annual “Good Beginnings” Conference.
- ◆ The Coalition completed a technology needs assessment of the Provider network. Results warranted the implementation of a Computer Mini-Grant application. Fifteen applications were received which resulted in twelve Dell computer systems being awarded to various providers.
- ◆ The *Strokes of Genius* project provided twenty child care centers with technical assistance, developmentally

appropriate classroom equipment and the dedicated service of an degreed early childhood professional. The first year of the project focused on four year old classrooms. The three year project is expected to help increase the school readiness of over 2200 Seminole County children.

- ◆ The Coalition provided over 2700 backpacks filled with educational materials and a Summer Activity Calendar to the graduates of the 2006-2007 Voluntary Prekindergarten Program in Seminole County.
- ◆ The Coalition worked closely with sister organizations and the provider network to spearhead local events for Children’s Week including the collection of over 1000 “hands” for display in the Capitol. As part of the Children’s Week initiative the Coalition also participated in the Winds of Change Campaign and the Guardian Ad Litem “Light of Hope” ceremony.
- ◆ The Coalition provided over \$10,000 in scholarships to send early learning and care teachers to the ECA, FACCM and the Family Child Care Home conferences.
- ◆ The creation of an Owners and Director’s group for the *Strokes of Genius* project has proven to be a success. Members meet bi-monthly to discuss pertinent industry specific issues such as staff hiring, training and retention as well as business best practices.



Seminole County “hands” adorned the Capitol at Children’s Week 2007.

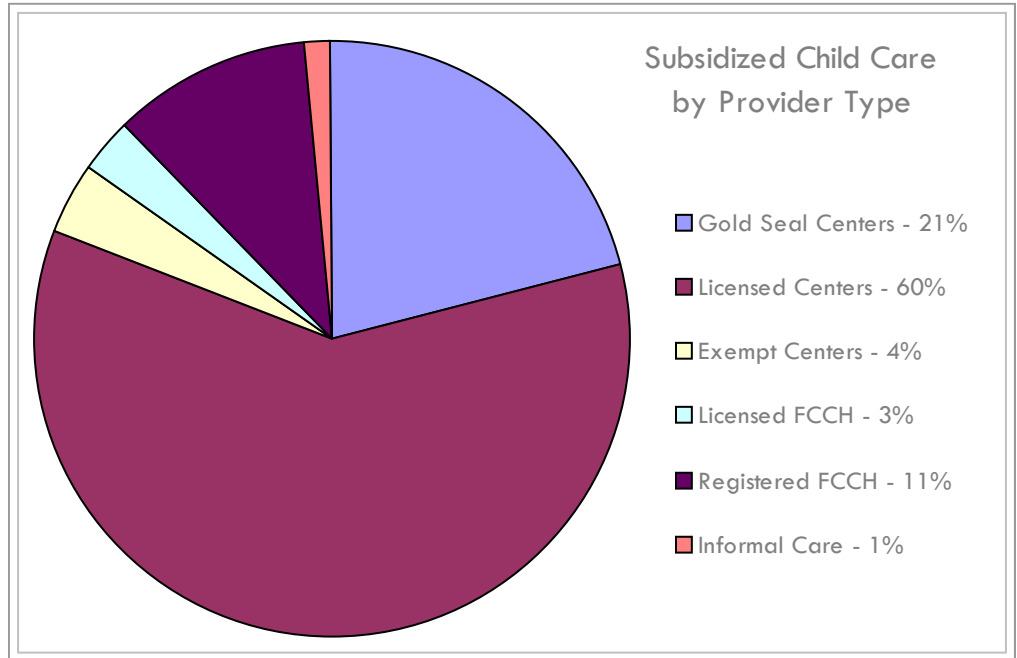
School Readiness Outcomes and Achievements

3699 children were served in the subsidized child care program.

On average 2,113 were served each month.

All licensed Seminole County providers accepting subsidized children receive at least 71% of the current market rate.

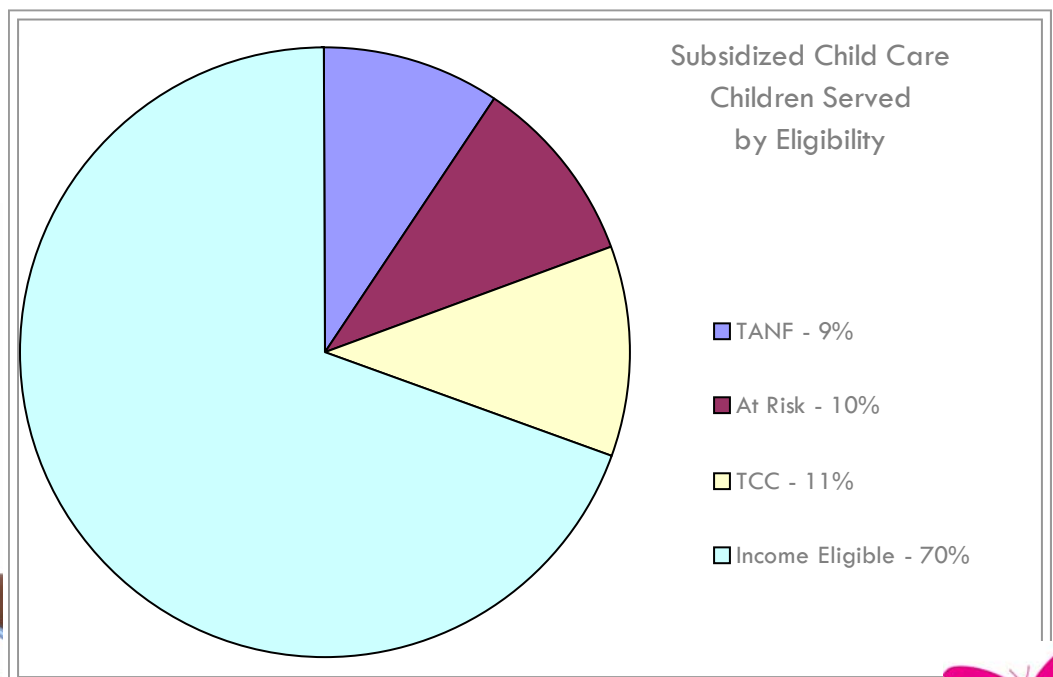
70% of all children receiving subsidized child care were in the income eligible category.



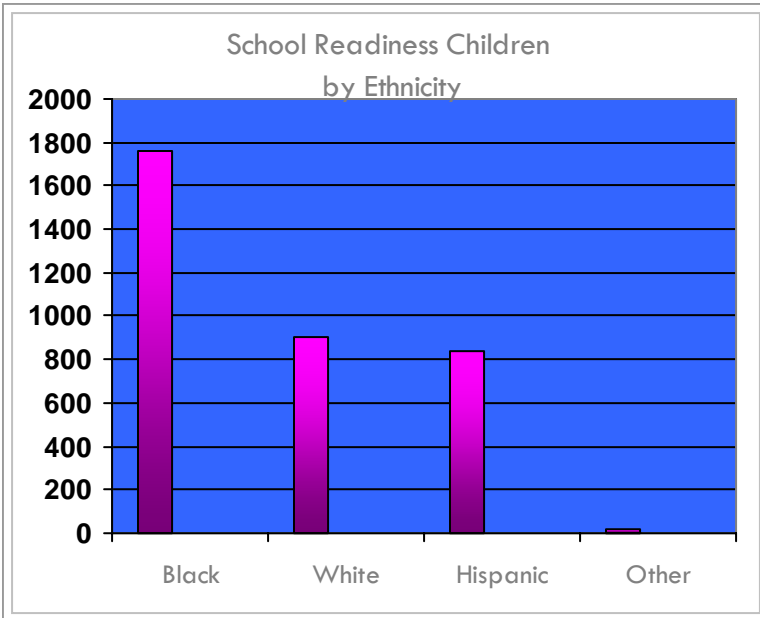
Child Care Resource and Referral helped a total of 1370 families with requests for financial assistance for child care.

The Coalition served an average of 691 school aged children a month during the 2006-2007 fiscal year.

The Coalition provider 2321 developmental screenings to children ages birth to five and 2378 Pre and Post Lollipop tests to four year olds.



School Readiness Outcomes and Achievements



74% of all children receiving subsidized child care were minorities.

Each year every kindergartener is screened within the first 30 days of the school year to determine their level of school readiness.

Seminole children scored higher than the state average and better than the 2005-2006 school year. FLKRS is comprised of three subtests.

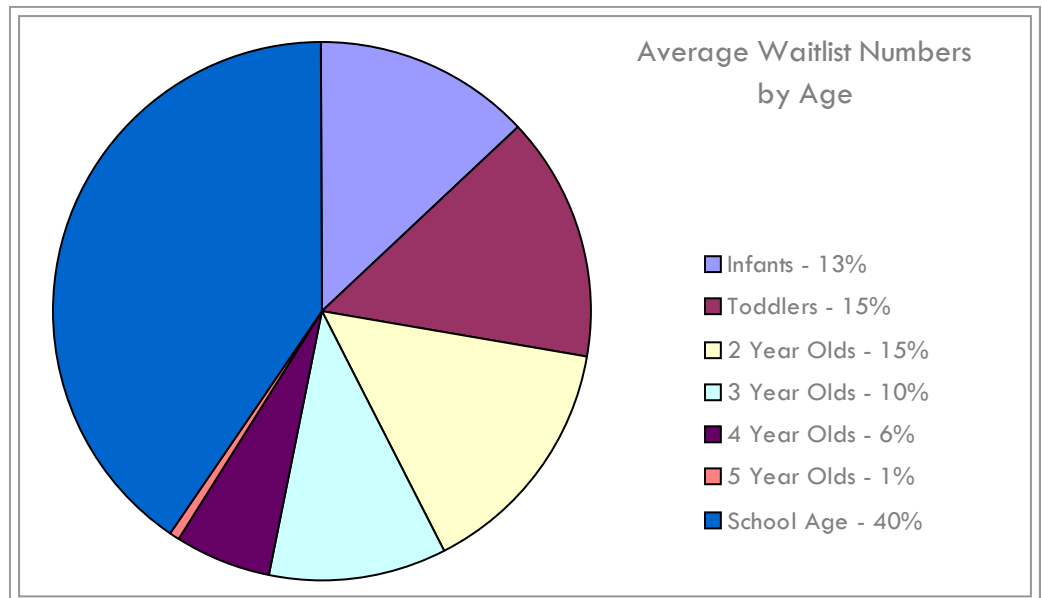
Children in the county scored ninety two percent ready overall on ECHOS which looks at 19 different areas aligned with the VPK standards and the two indicators of DIBELS, which look at letter recognition and initial sounds skills. This is a 5% increase over the 2005-2006 fiscal year.

School Readiness Wait List

There were an average of 278 children on the waitlist with 40 percent being of school age.

During the second quarter of the fiscal year, forecasting numbers indicated that enrollments had reached funding capacity. The Coalition began disenrollment of children ages 10 to 12 was authorized.

In addition, referrals from Workforce Central Florida (WCF) were frozen. TCC (Transitional Child Care) and at-risk children were placed on a one-out, one-in basis.



Children birth to five received highest priority for placement after TANF, TCC clients and at-risk children.

Seminole County remained on wait list status until March 2007 when forecasting indicated that entering into open enrollment was again feasible. At the high the wait list grew to 691 children. There were 461 children on

Voluntary Prekindergarten Outcomes and Achievements

- ◆ In the second year of the Voluntary Prekindergarten program the Coalition served 3605 children.
- ◆ 20 public and 26 private round-ups were held to issue certificates for the 2007-2008 school year.
- ◆ 86% of the projected four year olds in Seminole County participated in the program.
- ◆ To ensure sound utilization the Voluntary Prekindergarten Outreach and Awareness Grant staff conducted a market penetration survey in partnership with Seminole County Public Schools. The purpose of the survey was to find out if parents were aware of the



Over thirty providers volunteered their time to assist the Coalition in preparing 2700 backpacks for distribution to graduating VPK students.

- program and how they came to hear of it. The survey results indicated that the majority of parents learned about the program from their VPK provider, prompting the staff to include provider recruitment as a special initiative in the 2007-2008 fiscal year.
- ◆ To maintain and enhance the skills learned in the VPK program, the Coalition supplied each of the 2700 children who completed the 540 hour school year program with a Summer Activity Calendar and backpack filled with educational materials.

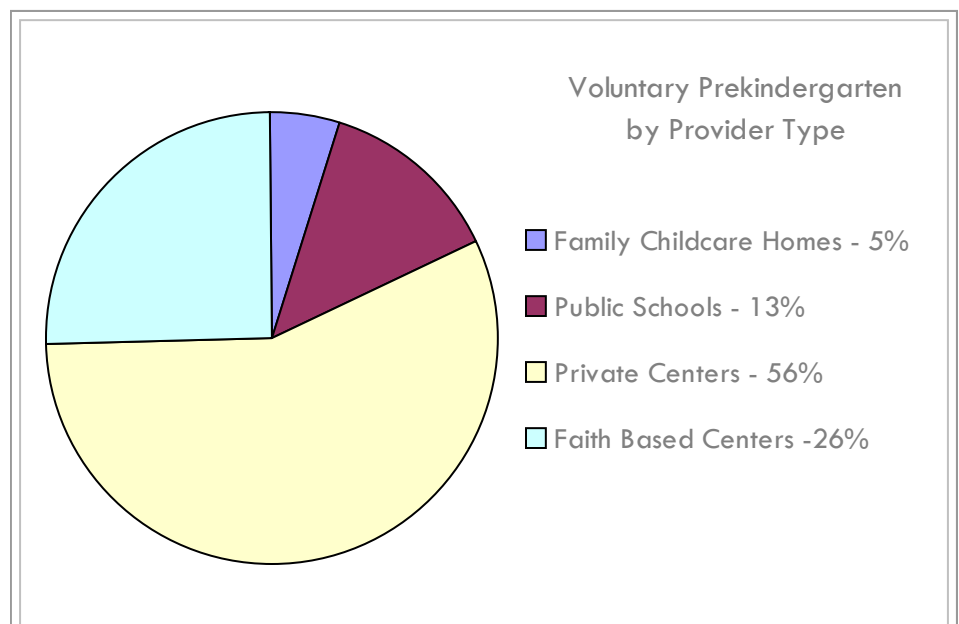
121 early learning providers offering 239 classrooms gave parents many choices.

54% of VPK providers are accredited.

An average of 2765 children per month attended from August to May.

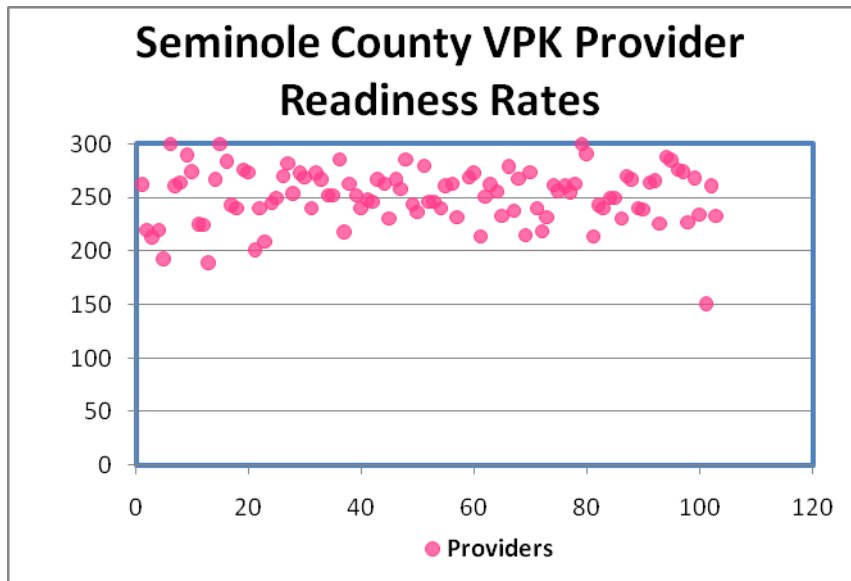
Approximately 150 children attended the 300 hour Summer VPK program.

Seven VPK Standards trainings were offered to the provider network. Approximately 200 participants attend.



Voluntary Prekindergarten Outcomes and Achievements

The hard work of the VPK provider network did not go unnoticed. Based on the children's FLKRS scores, the Department of Education then calculated individual VPK provider readiness rates. The rates are on a scale of zero to 300. Three Seminole providers made a perfect score of 300. Thirty four providers ranked in the top quartile, thirty one in the second, twenty eight in the third, leaving just ten in the fourth quartile with three of those classified as low performers.



2006-2007 Fiscal Year Programmatic Summary and Conclusion

The Coalition worked diligently throughout the 2006-2007 fiscal year to provide the children of Seminole County with a quality early care and education experience.

Quality initiatives such as the *Strokes of Genius* project, conference sponsorships and training opportunities as well as the early childhood education scholarship offered at Seminole Community College assisted providers down the path to professional development and ultimately increased the quality of the early education programs for the children of Seminole County.

Marked success in the Voluntary Prekindergarten program was realized with the release of the Department of Education's Readiness Rate.

Through the generous support of community partners old and new the Coalition was able to raise over \$276,000 in local matching funds which allowed 1251 children access to quality early learning and care services.

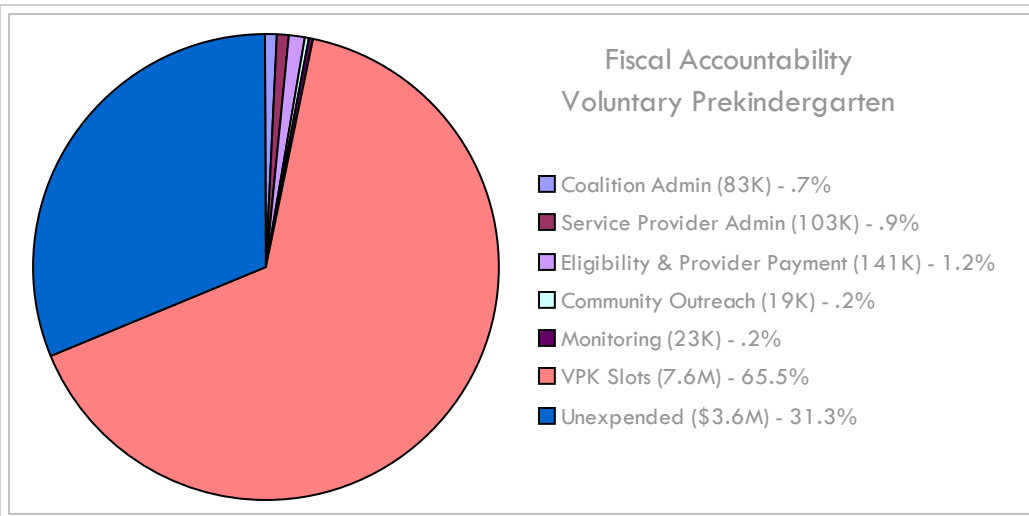
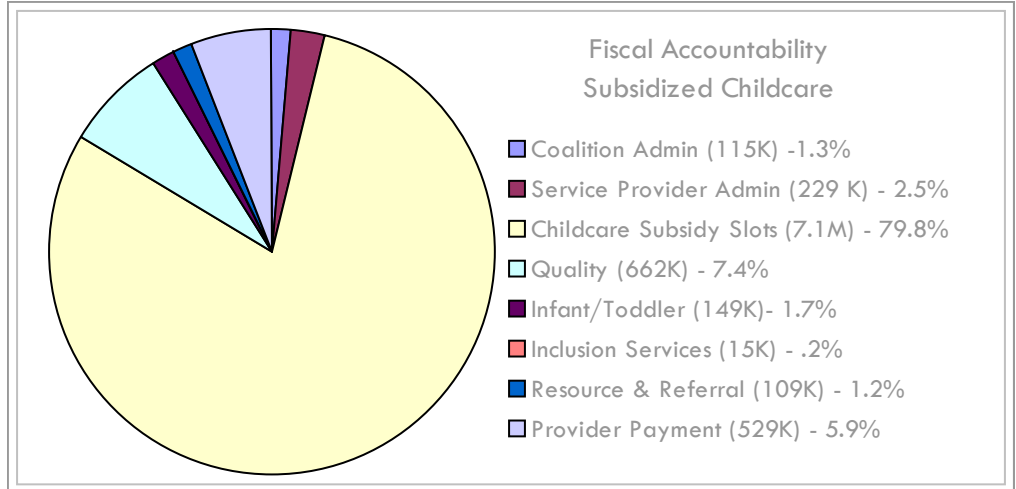


Coalition Fiscal Accountability

79.8% of the Coalition's subsidized child care funds go directly for child care services

Almost \$662,000 was invested to improve program quality.

The Coalition expended just 1.3% of its budget for administrative costs.



The Coalition served over 86% of children expected.

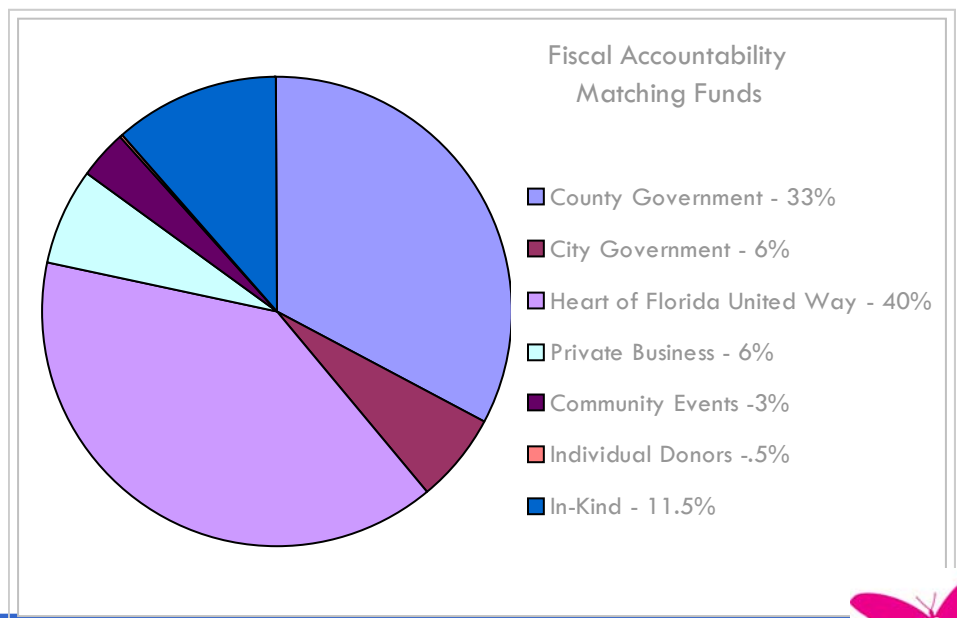
95% of the VPK budget expended went directly to fund 3,605 children in the VPK program.

The Coalition ended the fiscal year well within grant parameters and budget.

Matching Funds Accountability

With the support of many early education champions, the Coalition raised \$276,381.02 in local match which brought in over \$4.3M for subsidized child care slots.

Due to the necessity to realign budgets due to property tax reform only three of the seven municipalities contributed towards Coalition match this year. However, private business contributions increased by 4%.





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Executive Director

Karen Willis (Previous)
Ramica Watkins (Current)

Thank You to Our 2006-2007 Partners

The Coalition, working together with its primary contractor 4C of Central Florida, is required to raise local dollars every year that are matched at the state and federal level.

The contributions of the organizations and individuals listed below brought the Coalition Over \$4.3 Million in matching funds for the benefit of Seminole County's youngest children.

A Child's Discovery Center Inc.
Apartment Association of Greater Orlando
Seminole County Commission
City of Altamonte Springs
City of Lake Mary
City of Longwood
City of Oviedo
City of Sanford
City of Winter Springs

Heart of Florida United Way
Joe Bruun, Real Estate Solutions - USA, Inc.
Orlando Magic Youth Foundation
Plumley Land Development Corporation
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Sweetwater Kids Academy
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