



EARLY LEARNING COALITION
OF POLK COUNTY

Heart of Education

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**EARLY LEARNING COALITION OF POLK COUNTY CEO GRATEFUL
FOR SENATE PRE K-12 PROPOSAL OF OVER \$392 MILLION**

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For the first time in ten years early learning may be getting over \$392 million over the next 3 years in appropriations for Florida’s Voluntary Prekindergarten Program according to a recent Senate budget proposal. If approved, it would be the largest funding level for the program in over a decade. It would also pave the way to increase the wages of Florida VPK teachers, which is a current priority in state funding. It was great news to Early Learning Coalition of Polk County CEO Dr. Marc Hutek.

“Congratulations to the Florida Senate and particularly Appropriations Committee Chair Kelli Stargel, for their proposed investment in our state’s children”, said Hutek. “They’ve clearly stated our future lies in our children. I definitely see this as a great opportunity for the early childhood community. Kudos to our lawmakers!”

Since Florida’s VPK program was launched 17 years ago it is a free program that offers a critical year of learning for 4-year-olds to successfully prepare them for kindergarten. Kimberly Robinson, mother of two, praised the program noting the results she’s seen in her preschool’s VPK class. As a mother who has occasionally assisted with some of the class activities, she has seen the success of the program.

“They’re writing their names, they’re counting to 100, they’re learning how to write their numbers, and they’re trying to pick up a book and read,” said Robinson. “They want to be more involved in stuff like cooking and cleaning. Being independent is one of the biggest changes I’ve seen.”

VPK has also helped Robinson’s daughters’ interest in literacy sky-rocket. At home her older daughter attempts to teach her younger sister.

“They’ve learned to love books and love reenacting stories, and it’s amazing. Their imaginations have just gone to a hundred since they started VPK.”

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