

# ELCAC NEWSLETTER

The Early Coalition of Alachua County



## A Message from the CEO

As the CEO of the Early Learning Coalition of Alachua County (ELCAC), I am truly honored to serve in this vital role. It is with great excitement that I introduce our inaugural newsletter, which will serve as a platform dedicated to sharing our vision and the impactful work completed in our community.

The Board and staff at ELCAC do an amazing work to serve children in Alachua County. At ELCAC, we believe in the principle of "Ready for School, Ready for Life."

This vision drives us to ensure that every child in Alachua County has access to high-quality early learning opportunities that empower them to thrive in school and beyond.

We are committed to collaborate with families, educators, and community partners to create an environment where our children can flourish.

In this newsletter, you will find updates on our programs, stories from our community, and resources to support families and educators alike. ELCAC looks forward to connecting with you and working together to build a brighter future for our youngest learners.

Thank you for your continued support and engagement. Together, we can make a difference! I would like to thank the ELCAC Editorial team for committing to consistently working on the newsletter to ensure transparent communication with all ELCAC partners.

We look forward to an exciting year with many successes, we understand that when we all work together anything is possible.

*Xaviera White*

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- Join us on Social Media



THE EARLY LEARNING  
COALITION OF ALACHUA  
COUNTY (ELCAC)

4424 NW 13TH ST  
GAINESVILLE, FL 32609  
(352) 375-4110



# Hello and Welcome to the *Early Learning Coalition of Alachua*

“Our mission is to advocate for, support, and enhance the quality of early learning programs and services for children, families, and communities.”

## NEW TO ELCAC

**John Bonham**  
Chief Financial  
Officer (CFO)

**Sarah White**  
Fiscal Specialist

**Shynecia Thony**  
Quality Initiatives  
& PD Manager

**Dante Johnson**  
Fiscal  
Coordinator

## Holiday Chocolate Cake



### Ingredients:

- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- 2 cups sugar
- 3/4 cup unsweetened cocoa
- 2 tsp baking powder
- 1 1/2 tsp baking soda
- 1 tsp kosher salt
- 1 tsp espresso powder
- 1 cup milk, buttermilk/almond
- 1/2 cup vegetable oil, or canola oil
- 2 large eggs
- 2 tsp vanilla extract
- 1 cup boiling water

### Directions:

- Add all dry ingredients. Whisk to combine.
- Add wet ingredients, mix together on medium speed until combined. Reduce speed, add boiling.
- Distribute cake batter evenly between two cake pans. Bake 30-35 minutes
- Cool for 10 min, remove from pan.
- Frost with Chocolate Buttercream Frosting (can or homemade).

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

NOV

28 & 29 Thanksgiving  
Holiday

DEC

10

Ages and Stages  
(ASQ) Training  
1p-2p (Zoom)

DEC

21

Director Renewal  
Presentations  
ELCAC Training Room  
9a-10a

DEC

11

Executive  
Committee  
Meeting  
8:30a-10:00a

DEC

25

Winter Holiday

JAN

1

New Years  
Holiday

You can access ELCAC’s active calendar of events by clicking the “Calendar” menu option on our website [www.elcalachua.org](http://www.elcalachua.org).



## Tips For Children Who Bite



Toddler biting is a common behavior. There is a lot that parents and caregivers can do to reduce, and eliminate biting. To set the stage for effectively addressing this challenge, avoid calling or thinking of the child as a “biter” and ask others not to use this term. Labeling children can actually lead to them taking on the identity assigned to them, which can intensify biting behavior rather than eliminate it.

### Shaming & harsh punishment does not reduce toddler biting

Children bite in order to cope with a challenge or fulfill a need. For example, your child may be biting to express a strong feeling (like frustration), communicate a need for personal space (maybe another child is standing too close) or to satisfy a need for oral stimulation. Trying your best to understand the underlying cause of the biting will help you develop an effective response. This makes it more likely that you will be successful in eliminating the behavior.

### Why do Toddlers Bite?

There are many reasons why toddlers might bite. Some are listed below. If you think one of these reasons might be why your child is biting, scroll down for specific strategies on how to respond.

### Strategies to Prevent Toddler Biting

1. Distract your child with a toy or book.
2. Suggest how your child might handle the situation that is triggering the **need** to bite.
3. Suggest ways to share.
4. Reading books about biting can also help.
  - *Teeth Are Not for Biting*, by Elizabeth Verdick
  - *No Biting*, by Karen Katz
  - *No Biting*, Louise by Margie Palatini

### Toddlers might bite if they:

- Lack language skills necessary for expressing important needs or strong feelings like anger, frustration, joy, etc. Biting is a substitute for the messages he/she can't yet express in words like: “I am so mad at you”, “You are standing too close to me”, “I am excited”, or “I want to play with you.”
- Are overwhelmed by the sounds, light or activity level in this setting
- Are experimenting to see what will happen
- Need more active playtime
- Are over-tired
- Are teething
- Have a need for oral stimulation

### Information taken from:

Nemoirs Kids Health

<https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/stop-biting.html>



# PROGRAMS

## School Readiness & VPK

- The Florida Department of Education, Division of Early Learning (DEL), is pleased to share activity plans appropriate for preschool children, ages three to five years.
- These activity plans are aligned to the Florida Early Learning and Developmental Standards (FELDS) and include developmentally appropriate, hands-on activities to enhance learning in the preschool classroom, available in English and Spanish and can be accessed using the link [Activity Plans for the Preschool Classroom \(padlet.com\)](#)
- To aid in planning, the activity plans include learning objectives, targeted standards, step-by-step directions for activity implementation, materials needed, how to check for understanding and tips for scaffolding and extension.



We Support Literacy



### VPK Performance Metric:

Formerly the VPK Readiness Rate  
**"New Rule 6M-8.622 Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) Provider Performance Metric and Designation became effective 9/24/2024."**

- Call Sherry McMullun-Balchun for more information

## ♥ professional DEVELOPMENT

### **Child Development/Ages & Stages Questionnaire"**

Tuesday, December 10th from 1-2 pm on Zoom

- Training to Providers administering and reviewing the Ages and Stages Questionnaire/ASQ.

### **"Directors Renewal Presentation"**

Thursday, December 21 from 9 - 11:00 am:  
 ELCAC Training Room

- Prior registration by email is required by 12/2
- Directors who are renewing their Director's Credential and who need time and space to present on early childhood education are invited to attend to share their presentations with colleagues.

**Sessions are appropriate for all teachers and administration, and include:**

- Group discussions
- Opportunities to share and collaborate with others,
- Strategic planning, and classroom resources.

Attendees receive **FREE** resources and materials to support the use of the teaching practices.

Also, upon completing the short evaluation at the end of the training, participants will receive 1-hour in-service certificate AND be entered into a **raffle** for participation incentives. Please share with teaching staff!

Check out the Events Calendar on the ELCAC website at <https://elcalachua.org/events-calendar/> for a list of upcoming trainings.

**For questions please contact:**  
**Shynecia Thony, PD Manager**  
[sthony@elcalachu.org](mailto:sthony@elcalachu.org)  
 352-375-4110 Ext 126

**Director of Programs - Terrie Robinson**

# Providers Corner

This page celebrates providers and teachers in Alachua County. The content below was provided by a few newly opened sites. Please send your success stories, activities, and teacher shoutouts to Terrie Robinson ([trobenson@elcalachua.org](mailto:trobenson@elcalachua.org)), to be considered in future issues of this newsletter.



## High-class Educated Role Models Academy LLC (H.E.R Academy)

**Shawndria Dennison - Owner/Chancellor**

H.E.R. Academy is Florida's first and only award-winning, all girls, STEAM-Enriched, exclusive preparatory preschool!

While developing young leaders at an early age, H.E.R. Academy teaches etiquette, foreign languages, public speaking, financial literacy, and more! You may contact Mrs. Dennison at [chancellor@theeheracademy.org](mailto:chancellor@theeheracademy.org) or [admin@theeheracademy.org](mailto:admin@theeheracademy.org).



## Angelic Blessings Academy LLC

**Prisca Hall - CVO/Owner**

Angelic Blessings is a nurturing, community-centered preschool providing high-quality early childhood education services. We are Guided by the CARE Principles-Compassion, Accountability, Respect, and Excellence-supporting the whole development of young children. You may contact Mrs. Hall at 352-663-8778.



## Duval Early Learning Academy (ACPS)

The Alachua County Public Schools (ACPS) have reopened Duval Early Learning Academy and is enrolling students in VPK and Pre-K ESE.

This ACPS VPK school site is one of 9 across the district. Duval serves VPK students in school zones for Idylwild, Lake Forest, Rawlings, Shell, and Williams.

This site offers a variety of inclusion classrooms to accommodate the needs of all learners. For more information, please visit the website at [www.sbac.edu/duval](http://www.sbac.edu/duval) or check us out on Facebook@acpsprek.





## Family Engagement

- It's Family Engagement Month. To participate, simply complete a learning activity with a child and capture it with a photo.
- Your activity can be anything that promotes learning together, like making Thanksgiving cards to sharing with family. Please send your activity to **Faith Nobles at: [fnobles@elcalachu.org](mailto:fnobles@elcalachu.org)**



### Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R)

Services are offered to everyone regardless of income as it offers up-to-date child-care provider information based on individual needs, listings for food, clothing, shelter, transportation, employment opportunities, training, and professional development.



Scan the QR Code  
**Join ELCAC Book Club!**

A FREE book every  
month for  
Children 0-5 yrs.  
(352)375-410 Ext. 108



**Faith Nobles**  
Childcare Resource &  
Referral Coordinator

### Other Helpful Resources:

- **Division of Early Learning** – DEL  
<http://www.floridaearlylearning.com>  
or 1-866-357-3239
- **Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK)** and Readiness Rate Information  
<https://vpkrates.floridaearlylearning.com/home>
- **Early Steps** – [www.earlystepsdirectory.com](http://www.earlystepsdirectory.com)  
or 1-800-218-0001, Florida Diagnostic and Learning Resources System [www.fdlrs.org](http://www.fdlrs.org) or 850-245-0478 (resources for children with special needs)
- **Florida KidCare** –  
<http://www.floridakidcare.org> or 1-888-540-5437 (health insurance)
- **Zero to Three** <https://www.zerotothree.org/>
- **School Choice**  
<http://www.fldoe.org/schools/school-choice>  
or 850-245-9667
- **Early Childhood Learning & Knowledge Center** <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/ncecdtl>
- **Head Start** <https://www.ECS4KIDS.ORG> or 1-800-745-4836
- **United Way 211** <http://www.211.org/> or call 2-1-1
- **Child Abuse Registry** contact information:  
<https://www.myflfamilies.com/services/abuse>  
or 1-800-962-2873

## Holiday Mental Health Tip

### “Protect Your Mental Health”

1. Exercise (30 min -Daily)
2. Eat Healthy
3. Connect with Others
4. Get Enough Sleep (7-8 hours nightly)

# Family Services

## HELPING FAMILIES CONNECT TO CARE



**T**he Family Services Department oversees eligibility for families needing childcare assistance and offers community resources and referrals for parents seeking additional support. Family Services is often the first point of contact for families, and the department is committed to helping parents navigate available options.

### Some of the services we provide include:

- An equipped lobby with computer/scanner access
- A team of staff that can explain DEL requirements and the processes of getting care
- Assistance with navigating the statewide Family Portal and paperwork needed from parents
- Eligibility checks for parents and add new enrollments/redeterminations
- Customized lists of childcare providers that fit the family's unique needs
- Referrals to other community resources
- Assistance for providers on child transfers and enrollments
- Coordination with community agencies on emergency referrals

### Family Services Department Statistics (Latest Available)

- 364 new children were pulled (not necessarily approved) from the Wait List since September 2024.
- We are currently serving 1757 families in Alachua County.
- We have recertified 230 families since September
- We had at least 168 parents (within 2 months) come to the lobby for in person help.

### New Lobby Hours

- ELCAC's has extended their lobby hours to offer more assistance to their families with applications.
- Lobby hours are **M-Th: 8a-4p**, no appointment necessary.
- The lobby is closed on Fridays.

Director of Family Services- Angela Moore

# Highlights from ELCAC “Story Book Village” & Monthly Book Club



**By: Doretha Anderson**  
Community Outreach Coordinator

## CEO “Xavier White” Reading a Story to a Group of Children

ELCAC wants to share a wonderful moment from our **ELCAC Monthly Book Club**. Mrs. White, dressed up as the mouse from “*If You Give a Mouse a Cookie*,” by Laura Numeroff, and brought so much joy to the children as she captivated them with her lively reading.

She engaged students with questions, and each time they answered, she responded with her signature, “**GREAT JOB!**” These moments remind us why we love working at ELCAC—the children, the families we serve, our community partners, and the dedicated support of Mrs. Xavier White.



## ELCAC Staff Performs “Old MacDonald” for students at Duval Early Learning Academy



- For October, in honor of National Book Month, ELCAC hosted our Story Book Village with the theme book “*Old MacDonald*,” by Wendell Minor.
- Several ELCAC Team Members, along with Mrs. White, performed the Old MacDonald story-book for VPK students at Duval Early Learning Academy, and distributed books afterward, to all students in attendance.



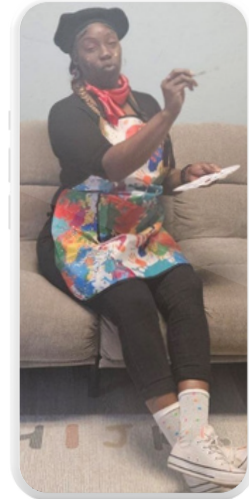




# ELCAC TEAM BUILDING

## Halloween & Employee Appreciation Day

Costume WINNER!



Shantell Hines as "Picasso"

### Who says work is not fun

## Employee Appreciation Day!

What a great time of the year to create an atmosphere of collaboration, bonding, and team building.. a process that helps team members build trust, improve communication, and create a sense of camaraderie.

That's exactly what staff at the Early Learning Coalition of Alachua County did!

Friday, November 8, 2024, ELCAC staff took time to participate in a "fun-filled" day of food, games, and fun. This definitely was a great way to start the holidays and end the year.

**TIP:** To improve communication and collaboration, team building activities help employees learn to work together and communicate effectively.

[See More on our Website](#)

### The Programs Department Rendition of "Pete the Cat Screams for Ice Cream"

ELCAC staff dressed up and participated on Halloween, in a friendly competition between departments. The Programs Department (below) won, with their rendition of "Pete the Cat Screams for Ice Cream, by Kimberly and James Dean and Shantell Hines (above) "Picasso" won individual costume.



# “Building Trust Through Relationships”



**Xaviera White, CEO**

*“As an Executive Leadership Team (ELT) at ELCAC, we strive for excellence. Our goal as leaders is to support the mission of ELCAC, and promote Early Childhood in Alachua County, through our Partners, Providers, Families, and Children.*

*Join us next month as we launch our new social media campaign, aimed at connecting with our early learning community in new and exciting ways. We can't wait to share it with you!”*

## ELCAC Executive Leadership Team (ELT)



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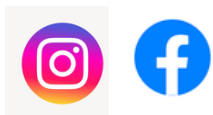


**Terrie Robinson**  
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## ELCAC Newsletter Editors

Terrie Robinson  
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Google Review

