

October 13, 2025



# ELCAC NEWSLETTER

*Scribbles*

## The Early Learning Coalition of Alachua County A Message from the CEO

### Newsletter CONTENT

The Early Learning Coalition of Alachua County is thrilled to announce that we're moving to a new location in the heart of Gainesville!

Our new space offers improved accessibility for families and childcare centers, conveniently located near the city bus station, community partners, and local businesses.

The office features inviting meeting areas designed to foster collaboration, innovation, and engagement. Being closer to the University of Florida will also strengthen our training and professional development initiatives, enhancing the support we provide to families, educators, and early learning partners.

This move represents more than a change in address, the move reflects our ongoing commitment to growth, accessibility, and community connection. From our new location, we will continue advancing our vision: Ready for School! Ready for Life!

"This move marks an exciting new chapter for the Coalition. While being closer to the heartbeat of our community, we will deepen our ability to serve families, empower providers, and collaborate with partners who share our mission. Our goal remains the same—to give every child the best possible start."



*Xavier White CEO*

- **Message from the CEO**
- **Pictures of the New ELCAC Campus**
- **UF Architects Help with Interior Designing for ELCAC New Office**

- **Motivating Students with Autism**

- **School Readiness & VPK Provider Performance**
- **Professional Development/Training**

- **ELCAC Appreciates its Community Donors**
- **New Contracted Providers to ELCAC**
- **CALENDAR OF EVENTS**



THE EARLY LEARNING COALITION OF ALACHUA COUNTY (ELCAC)

201 SE 2<sup>ND</sup> AVE, SUITE 201  
GAINESVILLE, FL 32601



• ELCAC Staff - Sherry McMullen-Blachun & Angela Moore- Owens



• UF Architect Students - Anne Pepper & Mitch Tuell

# TIPS *wellness* & Belonging

## Autism



### Strategies for Supporting Students with Autism

- 1- Provide visual schedules and predictable routines.
- 2- Use clear, concrete, and literal language.
- 3- Create a sensory-friendly environment, and allow for breaks.
- 4- Encourage Independence.
- 5- Break Tasks into smaller steps.
- 6- Use positive reinforcement.
- 7- Incorporate interests and strengths

#### For information on autism contact:

UF Center for Autism Related Diseases (CARD)  
4101 NW 89th Blvd.  
Gainesville, Florida 32606  
(352)265-2230

### Motivating Students with Autism

Helping people with autism stay motivated is very important, but it can also be challenging. Motivation matters because many people with autism have a limited range of skills and interests needed for everyday life and being part of the community. Without planned, positive experiences, they can struggle more as they get older. With the right support and successful experiences, they can grow, work, and enjoy life in the community.

Motivation can be influenced by many things, including:

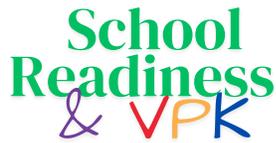
- Past learning experiences
- The way a person learns best
- Rewards or encouragement from inside or outside
- Whether they expect to succeed or fail
- How meaningful a task feels to them
- Environmental factors that affect focus and performance

Using careful, proactive strategies can help people with autism feel successful and proud of their accomplishments. These strategies provide structure, support, and encouragement, helping individuals overcome challenges and stay engaged in tasks.

By focusing on meaningful activities that match their interests and abilities, caregivers and educators can boost confidence and enjoyment. Over time, consistent positive experiences can build skills, foster independence, and encourage continued effort. Below are some strategies that can support motivation and positive outcomes.

### Supportive Environments

- Teach in natural environments that contain the cues and reinforcement which prompt and maintain learned behaviors whenever possible.
- Encourage and support independent effort, helping the individual see success as the result of their own actions rather than external factors.
- Plan appropriately stimulating tasks and minimize environmental distractions that hinder task engagement.



### Congratulations on School Performances!

- The following VPK Providers earned the highest VPK Performance Metric scores in Alachua County with an **“Excellent” designation, scoring at or above 97%.**
  - *First Presbyterian Church of Gainesville*
  - *Chiles Elementary School*
- Alachua County has recognized 2 charter/public schools for scoring an overall **School Grade of “A.”**
  - *The Caring and Sharing Learning School*
  - *Talbot Elementary School*

### Congratulations, Russell Scoates, Former Owner of Small World Daycare & Learning Center

After moving from England and finding his passion for helping families and improving early childhood education, **Russell Scoates** dedicated more than 23 years to the field as the owner of Small World Daycare. Now, he’s beginning a well-deserved retirement! Small World is under new ownership and will continue serving families across Alachua County.

ELCAC thanks you for your years of dedication and leadership. We wish you the very best in your next chapter. **Russell leaves us with this advice:**

*“Work together. Invite politicians into your schools so they can see the impact of early learning and understand the long-term value of investing in our programs.”*

## Professional DEVELOPMENT

### Pyramid Model: Nurturing & Responsive Relationships

- Date: Friday, October 10, 2025
- Time: 12:00 PM – 1:00 PM (1 hour)- Virtual
- Registration: [Click here to register](#)

**Overview:** Explore strategies for building nurturing relationships with students, families, and coworkers, a core part of the Pyramid Model for supporting children’s social-emotional development.

### Addressing Challenging Behaviors: Prevent, Teach, Reinforce – Part 1

- Date: Tuesday, October 14, 2025
- Time: 1:00 PM – 2:00 PM (1 hour)- Virtual
- Registration: [Click here to register](#)

**Overview:** This training introduces the research-based Prevent, Teach, Reinforce (PTR) framework for reducing challenging behaviors in early learning. Participants will learn practical strategies to create a positive classroom climate.

### Addressing Challenging Behaviors: Prevent, Teach, Reinforce – Part 2

- Date: Tuesday, October 28, 2025
- Time: 1:00 PM – 2:00 PM (1 hour)
- Format: Virtual via Zoom
- Registration: [Click here to register](#)

**Overview:** Building concepts from Part 1, this session takes a deeper dive into the Prevent, Teach, Reinforce (PTR) framework. Educators and administrators will learn to apply strategies more effectively and begin considering individualized support for children in early learning classrooms.

### For questions please contact:

### DeWaynique Barton Transformative Professional Development (TPD)

#### Coordinator

[dbarton@elcalachua.org](mailto:dbarton@elcalachua.org)  
352-375-4110 Ext 109

**“Building Trust Through Relationships”**

“Thank you, Community Partners, for giving to ELCAC. Your contribution helps children in your county/area fulfill the mission of ELCAC to be ready for school and ready for life.”

*South State Bank*



*City of Waldo*



**CALENDAR OF EVENTS**

- **10/17** – *Tacachale Benefits Fair* – Sharing information on childcare benefits  
9:00 am- 2:00 pm
- **10/17**- **ELCAC Closed for Homecoming**
- **10/21** – *Community Conversations*, Santa Fe College- 10:00 am - 12:00 pm
- **10/25** – *Trunk or Treat* at Shine School – inclusive event for children with sensory concerns  
- 5:00 pm - 8:00 pm
- **10/31** – *Boo at the Zoo* (Santa Fe College)  
3:00 pm -7:00 pm
- **11/07** – *2nd Annual Glow in the Dark Event* (Veterans Memorial Park, hosted by Fun4GatorKids) – FREE community event  
5:30 pm – 8:30 pm
- **11/11**- **Veterans Day Holiday**
- **11/27 & 11/28** - **ELCAC HOLIDAY BREAK**
- **11/13**– ELCAC “Virtual” Monthly Provider Meeting  
1:00 pm - 2:00 pm
- **12/06**– *Tacachale Benefits Fair* – Sharing information with employees on childcare benefits: 10:00 am - 1:00 pm
- **12/20** – Directors Renewal ELCAC Conference Room  
9:00 am - 11:00 am
- **12/24 & 12/25** **ELCAC HOLIDAY BREAK**

**New Contracted Providers with ELCAC**

- Welcome Todd & Denise Bergman, new owners of Small World Daycare & Learning Center (SR & VPK)
- Sherry Que Family Daycare Home (SR)
- Shanda Waters Family Day Care Home (SR)
- Train Up A Child Academy (SR)
- Sun Country Sports Center Inc (VPK)

**ELCAC Newsletter Editors**

Terrie Robinson  
Brandi Thomas - Ambrea Smith - Faith Nobles

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Children 0-5 yrs.  
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