



NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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County Commissioners to Participate in Celebrate Literacy Week, Florida

January 13, 2009 (Sarasota, FL) – Three Sarasota County Commissioners will be teaming up with The Early Learning Coalition (ELC) of Sarasota County to promote early childhood literacy for the children of Sarasota County.

As part of *Celebrate Literacy Week, Florida*, these Commissioners will be reading aloud to children at three Venice Child Care Centers on January 16th at 12:30 p.m. *Celebrate Literacy Week, Florida* is a statewide effort to promote literacy by raising awareness of the programs and projects offered by the Department of Education and its partner agencies, such as The ELC of Sarasota County.

The participating Commissioners and locations are:

Jon Thaxton at the Academy of Creative Learning, located at 1602 Banyan Drive in Venice

Joe Barbetta at St. Mark's Preschool, located at 508 Riviera Street in Venice.

Carolyn Mason at the South County YMCA Preschool, located at 701 Center Road in Venice.

The ELC's participation in *Celebrate Literacy Week, Florida* coincides with the launch of their community awareness campaign to "Eliminate the 30 Million Word Gap," which refers to the huge difference in the number of words a child from a less talkative home would hear by age 3 compared to a child from a more communicative environment. This campaign teaches parents simple things they can do to promote early literacy skills in young children and provides incentives for families who actively participate. The ELC's awareness campaign is part of a community-wide initiative called LEAF (Literacy Empowers All Families). The collaborative effort is funded by a comprehensive, multi-year grant from the Community Foundation of Sarasota County and in addition to the participation of the Early Learning Coalition, involves several other partners including the School Board of Sarasota County, Children First, and the Sarasota County Library System.

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The Early Learning Coalition (ELC) of Sarasota County was established in 1999 by Florida legislation. The purpose of the ELC of Sarasota County is to administer and facilitate a number of programs and services designed to support early education efforts that help to ensure Sarasota's Pre-K children (ages 0 - 5) enter school ready to learn. The ELC currently provides services to approximately 3,000 children in Sarasota County. For more information on Sarasota's VPK program or the ELC of Sarasota County visit www.earlylearningcoalitionsarasota.org .