

NCEF Early Learning Initiative

Since 2008, NCEF has invested over \$19,835,925 into the community.

The Issue

The early years of a child's life greatly determines their path to success. Early childhood development is the foundation of behavior, critical thinking, and social-emotional skills. Research shows 85 percent of brain development occurs before age 3, and this is shaped by the quality of a child's home and educational learning environments. This means that family life and early childhood education are critical to ensuring children are happy, healthy, and ready for kindergarten and beyond.

Kindergarten readiness is more than just knowing ABCs and 123s. It is about developing the whole child, including what it takes to promote social and emotional growth so they can not only read, write and compute, but work well with others, have their curiosity engaged and develop creative problem-solving skills — all of which are necessary for success in the 21st century workforce. A well-educated and caring staff, high program standards and an evidence-based curriculum based on a child's developmental needs are among the most important components of a high-quality early learning environment.

Fast Facts*

- There are approximately 1.1 million children younger than age 6 in Florida. According to the 2022 Florida Kindergarten Readiness Screener (FLKRS) only **49.8%** of kindergarten students in Collier County were deemed "ready for kindergarten."
- Children who receive high-quality early childhood education are less likely to repeat a grade, more likely to graduate high school and become higher earners in the workforce.
- Children who do not receive early childhood education are **70%** more likely to be arrested for a violent crime by age 18, **40%** more likely to become a teen parent, and **25%** more likely to drop out of school.

*Data from Florida Department of Education, The Florida Office of Early Learning, the National Education Association (NEA), Child Care of Southwest Florida, Inc. and the Economic Opportunity Institute

Collaborative Successes

- NCEF conducted independent studies in 2005, 2010, 2017 and 2022 to determine

key gaps in services within Early Learning across the county, launching successful efforts to increase capacity, affordability and access to early learning programs for children, as well as enhancing instruction quality and qualifications of teachers.

- Established a network of **Family Child Care Homes** for children in Immokalee, with **12 homes** currently funded by NCEF, and leveraging investments through the Child Care Executive Partnership (CCEP) which doubles NCEF's dollars for childcare scholarships.
- Since inception, **over 59,000** high-risk children ages 6 months to 5 years entered school with more learning tools by attending high-quality early childhood education programs.
- **Nearly 2,000** early learning, supplemental support services were provided to children and teachers to increase the quality of programming received.
- **75** pre-k teachers received training and instruction to improve their skills.

Meet Anyeli and Tracy, Age 5

Anyeli and Tracy are identical twins from a Spanish speaking home. When they started at Pathways Early Education Center of Immokalee at age 4, they had never attended school or been in a childcare setting before and spoke no English at all. Their teachers immediately noticed that both girls had no self-identity, often confusing their names with each other. With the help of the Early Literacy & Learning Model (ELLM) curriculum, both girls were able to learn their names and recognize classmates' names as well. In Fall 2020 they both successfully transitioned into kindergarten at Pinecrest Elementary and are thriving.



How your dollars make a difference:

\$1,000 provides two classrooms with reading libraries.

\$2,500 provides assessments and therapies for 19 children with behavioral challenges

\$5,000 provides literacy materials for an Early Childcare Center.

\$10,000 provides a qualified teacher to instruct a classroom.

\$25,000 provides scholarships for year-round care for 13 children

\$50,000 provides 400 preK students with a violin, literacy program to enhance brain development.



Strategic Initiative Partners

