

NCEF Early Learning Initiative

Since 2008, NCEF has invested \$29,765,340 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 under 5 in Florida. According to the 2023 Florida Kindergarten Readiness Screener (FLKRS) only **44%** 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 which identified gaps in Early Learning leading to the launch of successful efforts to increase capacity, affordability and access to early learning programs and enhancing instruction quality and qualifications of teachers.

- NCEF established a network of **Family Child Care Homes** in Immokalee, currently funding **12 homes** and maximizing its impact through the Child Care Executive Partnership (CCEP), which doubles NCEF's investment in childcare scholarships.
- Since inception, **nearly 50,000** high-risk children ages 6 months to 5 years entered school with more learning tools by attending high-quality early childhood education programs.
- Early learning, supplemental support services were provided to teachers to increase the quality of programming received affecting **over 1,300** children.
- **84** pre-k teachers received training and instruction to improve their skills.

Meet Isaiah, Age 4

Isaiah was born premature and was non-verbal with limited motor skills at age two. When he was just shy of 4 years old, he came to Fun Time Academy in January of 2024. He faced several developmental challenges, specifically with language development and struggled with basic tasks including holding a pencil or feeding himself. Fun Time partnered with the Specialized Therapeutic and Analysis Resources (STAR) Initiative to devise a comprehensive plan. In combination with the Early Literacy & Learning Model (ELLM) curriculum, within 4 months Isaiah excelled, by May of 2024 he was able to write his own name, feed himself and recognize all 26 letters in the alphabet!



How your dollars make a difference:

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

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

\$10,000 supports a qualified teacher to instruct a classroom

\$5,000 provides an early childcare center with literacy materials

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

\$1,000 equips two classrooms with reading libraries



Strategic Initiative Partners

