



## Polk County School Readiness Coalition, Inc.

# ANNUAL REPORT Fiscal Year 2003-2004

### INTRODUCTION

The Polk County School Readiness Coalition, Inc., is a not for profit 501(c)(3) organization that was created in 1999 by Florida Legislators, with the enactment of Florida Statute 411.01. The Coalition is responsible for overseeing and funding early education and care services for Polk County using federal and state funds along with local funds from the Board of County Commissioners and United Way of Central Florida.

The purpose of the Coalition is to develop, implement, and monitor school readiness programs in which children ages birth to 5 will receive quality, comprehensive services appropriate to their needs to assure their readiness to enter kindergarten prepared to succeed. The Polk Coalition also provides childcare services for school-age children up to age 13.

The Coalition, along with Florida Legislature, recognizes that "school readiness programs increase children's chances of achieving future educational success and becoming productive members of society". The Coalition, made up of a board of community leaders, has invested hundreds of hours in the development and implementation of a community wide strategic plan designed to achieve this goal.

The Coalition provides school readiness services through contracts with Youth and Family Alternatives, Inc. and the School Board of Polk County. These contracts include quality initiatives & early education and care services in a variety of settings including private, faith-based and school based sites.

**VISION STATEMENT**

*All children enter school healthy, ready and eager for life long learning with the collaborative support of parents, families, educators and the community.*

**MISSION STATEMENT**

*The Coalition will provide leadership, direction, and integrated resource management for quality services that support our vision of success for children.*

**Executive Committee**

**Ray Graber**  
Bright House Networks  
Coalition Chair

**Florrie Deaner**  
Polk County  
Health Department  
Vice-Chair

**Mary Jo Plews**  
Healthy Start Coalition  
Secretary

**Charles McPherson**  
SunTrust  
Finance Committee-Chair

**Jim Rhodes**  
Publix Super Markets  
Past Board Chair

**Malcolm Scott**  
U. S. Agrichemicals  
Enhancements Committee-Chair

**Coalition Staff**

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Lakeland, FL 33803

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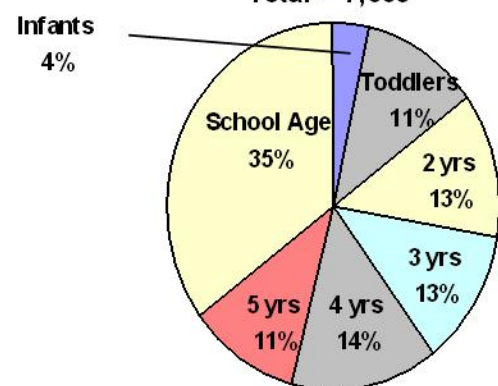
**PROGRAM SERVICES**

The Polk County School Readiness Coalition provides services to eligible children ages birth to 5 with services appropriate to their needs to assure their readiness to enter kindergarten prepared to succeed. The Polk Coalition also provides childcare services for school-age children up to age 13. The Coalition served a total of 7,005 children last year.

**Total Children Served**

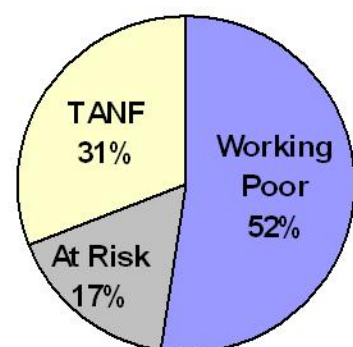
(Unduplicated by Age)

Total = 7,005



**Program**

As of June 30, 2004



**PROGRAM PERFORMANCE**

*The School Readiness Universal Screening System (SRUSS) is used to assess the school readiness of all children in the first 45 days of kindergarten.*

All children entering school in Florida are assessed for school readiness within the first 45 days of kindergarten entry using the School Readiness Universal Screening System (SRUSS). Early Screening Inventory Status (ESI-K) and the Work Sampling System Status (WSS) were the tools used for the SRUSS in Polk County for FY 2003-2004. The Fall 2003 results showed that 77% of Polk County students were "Ready Now" for kindergarten, compared to 84% in the state. There were 16% classified as "Getting Ready," compared to 12% for the state, and 6% of students were "Not Ready Yet" with a 4% state average. These numbers are from a sampling of 5,698 Polk County kindergarteners.

**SIMPLIFIED POINT OF ENTRY**

The Coalition provides a simplified point of entry and unified wait list for all school readiness funded programs through Youth and Family Alternatives, Inc. Eligibility determination for all school readiness programs is processed through Youth and Family Alternatives, Inc.

**QUALITY INITIATIVES**

To ensure quality is addressed, the Florida Partnership for School Readiness has provisions in the grant to the Coalition for utilization of not less than 4% of funding for quality initiatives. The Coalition used that and other funding for quality initiatives that include increased payments to Gold Seal providers, nurses for school-based programs, health and developmental screenings and additional therapy when needed for children 0-5, installation of safety alarm systems in provider vans, a dental hygiene program, "Caring For Kids" Program, Inclusion Specialist, Infant and Toddler Specialist, the Hanen Project (a project that supports language intervention for infants and young children), Take Home Library for school-based programs and the Florida First Start Program. The Coalition also spent over \$125,000 in provider incentives (including computers, Gold Seal awards, and educational materials), \$21,936 in mini grants to fund materials and activities that increased quality in school readiness programs, and \$37,580 to purchase quality curriculum programs for providers.

**SPECIAL INITIATIVES**

At the end of FY 2003-2004, the Coalition received additional funds from the state and partnered with the Polk County Health Department to provide school/child care physicals and immunizations to prepare children for school and their childcare programs. The Health Department in turn partnered with Central Florida Health Care to reach throughout Polk County. A total of 6 clinics were held throughout June in Lakeland, Auburndale, Dundee and Frostproof.

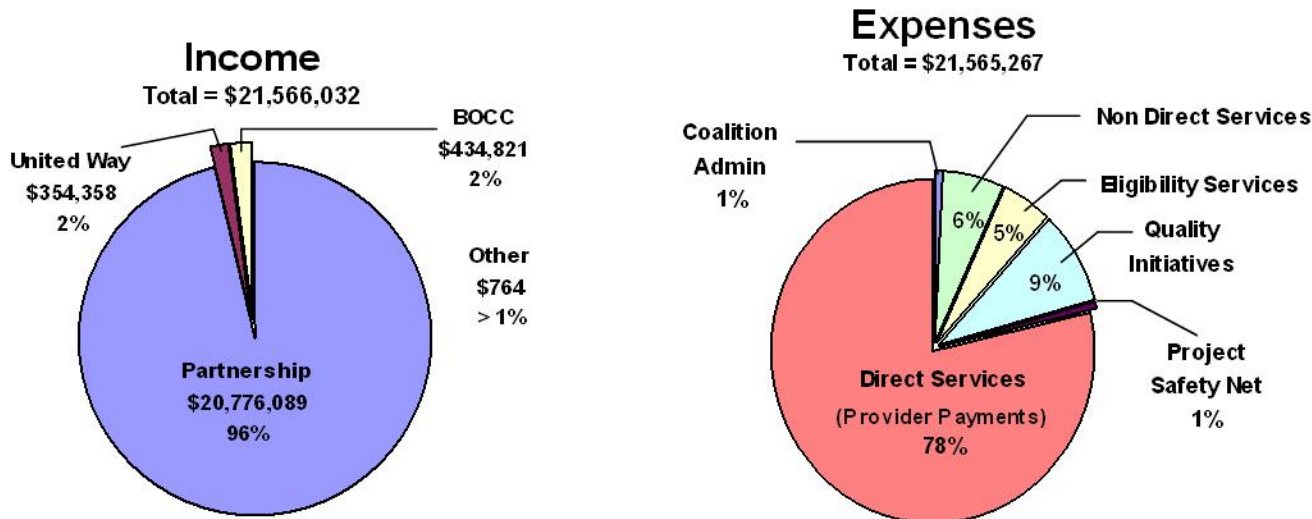
The Coalition board realizes the importance of advancing the level of early education and care providers. The Teacher Education and Compensation Helps (T.E.A.C.H.) scholarship program provides scholarships for the A.S. degree in early childhood education, the Florida Director Credential, the CDA Equivalency, the national CDA assessment and the national CDA renewal. The Coalition was able to assist with \$59,400 in additional funds for the T.E.A.C.H. program in FY 2003-2004.

Additional special initiatives for FY 2003-2004 included: 38 computers purchased for priority quality school readiness providers; a "model classroom" for the Success by 6 initiative at Family Fundamentals and additional Take Home Library books for the school-based PreK and Florida First Start children. The Coalition also distributed over 1000 "The Best We Can Be: Parents and Children Growing Together!" through Healthy Start, Healthy Families, Florida First Start, the Achievement Academy and the Success by 6 Baby Showers.

**Polk County has the largest number of T.E.A.C.H. scholarships in the state of Florida.**

## FINANCIAL REPORT

**The Coalition budget for FY 2003-2004 was approximately \$21,794,546.**



For more information on school readiness programs & services contact:

**Polk County School Readiness Coalition**

**1811 Richmond Road  
Lakeland, FL 33803  
Phone: (863) 413-9890  
Fax: (863) 413-9743**

PCSRC Website  
[www.polk-fl.net/parents/coalition.htm](http://www.polk-fl.net/parents/coalition.htm)

## CHILD CARE RESOURCE & REFERRAL

The Coalition provides Child Care Resource & Referral (CCR&R) through Youth and Family Alternatives, Inc. These services include helping parents find child care that best meets their family's needs, maintaining a comprehensive database of child care providers, providing families with unbiased, computer-generated referrals for child care, and referring families to other service agencies in the community.

## PROGRAM CHALLENGES

In July 2003, the Coalition began meeting with the Department of Children and Families, Affiliated Computer Services (service provider for Polk Works), and Youth and Family Alternatives, Inc. to review services to the clients they refer. Agency caseloads were matched for possible closures and some referral times were reduced. A decision was made by the agencies to stop the automatic rolling over of those clients into the Working Poor categories ahead of clients on the school readiness wait list. Decisions were also made to reduce some referral time frames and also to review the needs for care whether part-time or full-time. After these adjustments were made, enrollment for children on the wait list began again. The Coalition continues to meet with these agencies on a regular basis to discuss issues that might affect services to children and to assure the maximum use of available funds.

