



## ELC Celebrates Record Kindergarten Readiness Rates Among VPK Attendees

VPK works. It really works.

The Early Learning Coalition of Sarasota County is thrilled to announce a remarkable achievement in local early childhood education, with the latest kindergarten readiness rates for local children who participated in Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten (VPK) reaching an all-time high.

According to the STAR Early Literacy assessment tool by Renaissance, a global leader in pre-K-12 education technology, an impressive 68% of Sarasota County children who attended VPK demonstrated readiness for kindergarten. This marks a notable increase of 4 percentage points from the last reporting period a couple years ago. Sarasota County is now well above the current Florida average and closing in on clinching the top spot in the state.

On the other side of the equation, those who did not attend VPK scored 20 points lower on the readiness scale—a glaring gap that underscores the effectiveness of Florida's free program for four-year-olds, regardless of income.

The success of our VPK programs show the dedication and hard work of early educators across the county. The targeted efforts of the Early Learning Coalition's professional development team have been instrumental in ensuring that our preschool teachers receive the guidance and support they need to excel in their roles. Through coaching, training, and mentoring, our Early Childhood Specialists empower hundreds of teachers each year to provide high-quality, enriching experiences for our children.

"VPK is more than 'daycare.' VPK teachers are more than babysitters. Our trained early educators spend their days making sure our children master the skills needed to be successful in kindergarten and beyond. They all deserve kudos for a job well done," states Dianne Lawrence, VPK Manager at the Early Learning Coalition, as she expresses her pride in the readiness rates.

In recognition of this achievement, Janet Kahn, CEO of the Early Learning Coalition, shared, "This accomplishment is a testament to our prioritizing quality in Sarasota County. It reflects ELC's commitment to ensuring that every child in Sarasota County has the opportunity to thrive academically and socially. To that end, we are determined to keep the numbers on an upward trend."

It is important to note that children are assessed in English, reflecting the language of instruction in the VPK program. This fact makes the readiness rate even more notable when considering the number of children who are learning English as a second language.

"The bar is now set high, and we intend to keep it there," says Lorrie Young, who leads the ELC's professional development team. "I have complete confidence that together, my team and local VPK teachers, will keep this momentum going."