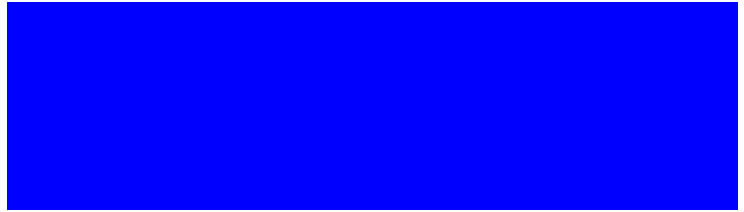


Early Learning Consortium



August 6, 2015

Stephanie Gehres
Deputy Director
Florida's Office of Early Learning
250 Marriott Drive
Tallahassee, FL 32399

Dear Ms. Gehres:

On behalf of Florida's Early Learning Consortium we are thankful that Florida's Office of Early Learning has engaged us in discussions relating to Group Size for Florida's Child Care and Development Fund plan. As an organization committed to ensuring quality early childhood settings for its youngest citizens we are submitting the following recommendations for your consideration.

GROUP SIZE RECOMMENDATIONS

The proposed group sizes are as follows:

Infants (0-12 months): The group size for infants may not exceed twelve (12) children with a minimum of three teachers and a minimum of 35 square feet of usable floor space must be available per child in the infant classroom. Florida's Department of Children and Families Office of Child Care Licensing through rulemaking authority will clearly define stable barriers that define usable classroom space as one in which a child's educational needs can be met through limited and/or minimal departure from the defined area. Two of the three teachers in the infant classroom must possess at a minimum an active credential pursuant to s. 402.305(3), F.S. as recognized by Florida's Department of Children and Families within 24 months from date of enactment. For an infant group size of (8) children in which the minimum 35 square feet of useable floor space is met only the lead teacher must possess at a minimum an active credential pursuant to s. 402.305(3), F.S. as recognized by Florida's Department of Children and Families within 24 months from the date of enactment.

Toddlers (13 – 24 months): The group size for toddlers may not exceed twelve (12) children with a minimum of two teachers and a minimum of 35 square feet of usable floor space must be available per child in the toddler classroom. Florida's Department of Children and Families Office of Child Care Licensing through authority will clearly define stable barriers that define usable classroom space as one in which a child's educational needs can be met through limited and/or minimal departure from the defined area. The lead teacher must possess at a minimum an active credential pursuant to s. 402.305(3), F.S. as recognized by Florida's Department of Children and Families within 24 months from the date of enactment.

Twos (25 – 36 months): The group size for two year olds may not exceed 22 children with a minimum of two teachers, and a minimum of 35 square feet of usable floor space must be available per child in the two year old classroom. Florida's Department of Children and Families Office of Child Care Licensing through rulemaking authority will clearly define stable barriers that define usable classroom space as one in which a child's educational needs can be met through limited and/or minimal departure from the defined area. The lead teacher must possess at a minimum an active credential pursuant to s. 402.305(3), F.S. as recognized by Florida's Department of Children and Families within 24 months from the date of enactment.

Threes (37 – 48 months): The group size for three year olds may not exceed 30 children with two teachers and a minimum of 35 square feet of usable floor space must be available per child in the three year old classroom. Florida's Department of Children and Families Office of Child Care Licensing through rulemaking authority will clearly define stable barriers that define usable classroom space as one in which a child's educational needs can be met through limited and/or minimal departure from the defined area. The lead teacher must possess at a minimum an active credential pursuant to s. 402.305(3), F.S. as recognized by Florida's Department of Children and Families within 24 months from the date of enactment.

Fours (49 – 60 months): The group size for four year olds may not exceed 40 children with two teachers and a minimum of 35 square feet of usable floor space must be available per child in the four year old classroom. Florida's Department of Children and Families Office of Child Care Licensing through rulemaking authority will clearly define stable barriers that define usable classroom space as one in which a child's educational needs can be met through limited and/or minimal departure from the defined area. The lead teacher must possess at a minimum an active credential pursuant to s. 402.305(3), F.S. as recognized by Florida's Department of Children and Families within 24 months from the date of enactment.

Staff Qualifications

Inasmuch as no credentials are required for teachers in each classroom in Florida, these recommendations provide a first step towards recognizing the importance of teachers who possess the knowledge, skills and competencies to be effective early educators. Moreover, the recommendations provide a phased-in approach for teachers to acquire at a minimum an active credential pursuant to s. 402.305(3), F.S. as recognized by Florida's Department of Children and Families within 24 months from the date of enactment. Additional T.E.A.C.H. scholarships may be made available to assist teachers in obtaining the required credentials.

We look forward to working with Florida's Office of Early Learning as you continue to identify system development improvements for Florida's Early Learning System. As a critical factor of organizing a system of quality early learning opportunities, we strongly endorse the implementation of core benchmarks aligned to a payment structure that supports positive child outcomes.

Sincerely,



Michele Watson, Consultant
Early Learning Consortium