



## Press Release

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### Child Care Centers Making Strides in Early Learning Recognized at Graduation Ceremony

**JACKSONVILLE, Fla., Nov. 17, 2011** — This morning, **Early Learning Coalition of Duval** hosted a graduation ceremony honoring new and returning child care centers, participating in the **Guiding Stars of Duval** program, for their commitment to prepare children to enter school ready to learn and achieve great success in their academic careers.

It was a full house at the Legends Community Center with over 70 child care center directors, elected officials and local non-profit partners in attendance at the ceremony recognizing the accomplishments of the 159 early-learning centers whose directors and staff chose to voluntarily participate in the program.

*"This day marks a great accomplishment in professional development for these Guiding Stars of Duval child care providers," said ELC of Duval Executive Director Susan Main. "By participating in this voluntary program, each of these centers and family child care homes is saying that they are committed to not just meeting the minimum standard for learning at their centers, but they want to exceed that standard and help the children they serve start school with learning skills that are superior to their peers."*

Guiding stars, a two-year coaching and support program, transitions child care centers into early-learning providers so children start learning from the moment they enter into care. This year, 13 family child care homes also participated in Guiding Stars through a pilot program tailored to the child care services they provide in their residences.

Dr. Donnie Horner, Education Commissioner for Mayor Alvin Brown, spoke on the level of achievement the child care centers attained.

*"The City of Jacksonville has been a proud partner in promoting early literacy and this administration is proud to continue that tradition as a partner with **Guiding Stars of Duval**." said Horner. "*

To participate in Guiding Stars, centers voluntarily enter into the program, funded in part by the City of Jacksonville, through the Jacksonville Children's Commission, to receive a one- to five- star rating upon completion of the program. Each star correlates to five areas of early learning including environment, ratio, staff development, curriculum and program operations/ family involvement. The rating in each of the five areas, in addition to overall star rating, helps parents choose quality learning centers for their children.



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Coaching support is provided through the Jacksonville Early Learning Partnership or Jacksonville Journey Early Learning Program. Coach support is provided by the Early Learning Coalition of Duval, Jacksonville Children's Commission or Episcopal Children's Services.

For more information on Guiding Stars, or the services provided by ELC of Duval, call 904-208-2044 or visit [www.ChooseQualityChildcare.org](http://www.ChooseQualityChildcare.org).

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