The science of early childhood development shows that high quality early learning experiences positively impact children’s brain development, well-being, and academic success. It is vital that local, state and national early learning systems, policies, and infrastructure be aligned with the science. This presentation will share research, policy, and advocacy efforts in support of high quality early learning and early intervention experiences for young children and their families.

Melissa Clements, Ph.D. – Vice President / Chief Research Officer, Children’s Forum. Melissa received her doctoral degree in Developmental Psychology with specialization in early childhood from Wayne State University in 2001 and held a post-doctoral fellowship at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. She currently serves as VP/Chief Research Officer at the Children’s Forum. Her areas of expertise include early childhood education, high-risk groups, project management, program evaluation, and applied research.

Phyllis Kalifeh, Ed.D. – President and CEO, Children’s Forum. Phyllis holds a doctoral degree in educational leadership and policy studies from FSU. She has been President and CEO of the Children’s Forum since 2000. Her career has spans over 30 years in delivery of services for young children and their families including administration of grants and programs such as Head Start, Early Head Start, statewide child care resource and referral network, training programs for practitioners and parents, subsidy administration and former owner of her own school.

Denise Bishop, M.A., M.S. – T.E.A.C.H. Outreach Coordinator, Children’s Forum. Denise is a doctoral student at FSU in the ELPS department focusing primarily on program evaluation. Her prior training in school psychology and counseling psychology has provided her with many professional opportunities within the fields of special education, literacy research, early childhood education, and policy development and advocacy. Denise currently works at the Children’s Forum. Since moving to Tallahassee in 2003, she has become an avid Seminoles fan!