



# Just for Parents

## Max, Ruby and the Art of Perseverance

Max is determined to purchase Red-Hot Marshmallow Squirters from the local grocer to top his earthworm cake in the book “Bunny Cakes,” which tells the story of the misadventures of Max and his older sister, Ruby.

However, the grocer cannot understand his handwriting, and so Max must find a new way to communicate what he needs. As I read the book to a class in Jefferson County, the students instantly picked up on Max’s determination and said, “Max kept trying.”



The struggles that Max encounters in the book are similar to the ones our youngest students experience every day as they develop literacy skills. As a former educator and principal, I can tell you that reading and writing fluency are improved through practice and repetition.

A student’s early writing projects are often filled with misspellings and missing punctuation marks. But don’t get frustrated; students learn best through practice, both inside and outside of the classroom.

As winter break nears, there are many activities families can take part in to support and encourage lifelong readers. Here are a few ideas to promote literacy in your home.

**Create a Reading Nook** – Set aside one hour each day during the winter break as a “reading hour.” Make sure each family member has plenty of books to choose from and a comfortable and quiet place to curl up and read.

**Make Grocery Lists** – Ask your child to write down the family’s grocery list before heading out to the store. Praise your child during the activity, even if they misspell certain words. For very young children, have them draw pictures of the items on the list.

**Play Rhyming Games** – Entertain each other during long car rides by rhyming new and challenging words.

**Write a Book** – Encourage your child to write a book about his or her winter break and read it to the whole family.



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BUREAU OF FAMILY & COMMUNITY OUTREACH  
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Family Engagement

Faith & Community Based Initiatives

Safe Schools

Dropout Prevention

Awards & Recognition Programs

21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers

Mentoring/Student Assistance Initiatives



## Alternative Pathways to Prevent Students from Dropping Out of School



The benefits of staying in school are clear—employment opportunities and earning potential considerably increase when a student receives a high school

diploma. Therefore, it is important to understand why students drop out and provide alternatives that address the risk factors, which could cause a student to not complete high school.

A recent [study](#) found that the top five reasons students dropout include too many days of school missed, belief that the GED is an easier route, poor grades or failing in school, dislike of school, and failure to keep up with schoolwork.

Alternative pathway programs provide students with the necessary supports designed to address the needs of students in danger of dropping out. Programs in Florida include the [Performance-Based Exit Option](#); [Teenage Parent Program \(TAP\)](#); and [Florida Virtual School](#).

For information about alternative pathways available within your district, contact your [District Dropout Prevention Coordinator](#).

### Academic Acceleration Through Dual Enrollment

More than 50,000 students participate in Florida’s dual enrollment program each year. Dual enrollment allows students in grades 6-12 to take postsecondary coursework and earn credit toward high school completion. Students can earn industry certification or an associate or baccalaureate degree at a Florida public or eligible private institution.

In order to take dual enrollment classes students must meet the following criteria:

- Be enrolled as a student in a Florida public or nonpublic secondary school (grades 6-12), or in a home education program;
- Have a 3.0 unweighted high school grade point average (GPA) to enroll in college credit courses, or a 2.0 high school unweighted GPA to enroll in career dual enrollment courses;
- For college credit courses, achieve a minimum score on a common placement test;
- Meet any additional eligibility criteria specified by the postsecondary institution in the Dual Enrollment Articulation Agreement; and
- Cannot be scheduled to graduate prior to the completion of the dual enrollment course.

Students must also maintain a 3.0 unweighted high school GPA and the minimum required postsecondary GPA specified in the Dual Enrollment Articulation Agreement for continued enrollment in college credit dual enrollment courses.

For help answering additional questions regarding Dual Enrollment opportunities, please visit the Office of Articulation’s website at <http://www.fldoe.org/policy/articulation/ccd/> or via telephone at (850)245-0427. For information on how your student can participate in dual enrollment opportunities, contact your school counselor.

# Voluntary Prekindergarten Education Program

If you want your 4-year-old to be well-prepared for kindergarten, taking advantage of Florida's free Voluntary Prekindergarten Education Program or VPK makes sense.

Kindergarten readiness rates show that more children who complete VPK are ready for kindergarten than those who do not attend.

VPK prepares young learners for success in kindergarten and beyond. Children must live in Florida and be 4

years old on or before Sept. 1 of the current year to be eligible.

The program helps children build a strong learning foundation using educational materials geared to various stages in a child's development.

Parents can choose from different educational settings and program options – a school year program, a summer program or specialized



instructional services for children with special needs. For more information, go to [www.floridaearlylearning.com](http://www.floridaearlylearning.com).

## 2015 Celebrate Literacy Week, Florida!



Just Read, Florida! is already building excitement for Celebrate Literacy Week, Florida! (CLW), which will be held January 26-30, 2015! This year's theme, "Reading Accelerates Success," encourages students to connect literacy with all kinds of careers in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM). Activities will provide a unique experience to students throughout the state that will help to solidify the importance of literacy and its tie to STEM in the minds of Florida's children.

Just Read, Florida!, along with its educational partners, will bring portable planetariums to elementary and middle schools so that students can sit under the stars and learn how reading relates to science and space technology. We'll talk about constellations and their relationship to mythology, planets, and space exploration, tying it all back to the importance of literacy.

Celebrate Literacy Week, Florida! is an annual event during which students, teachers, administrators, parents and volunteers all celebrate the the importance of literacy as a basis for student achievement. It's also a time to encourage students to keep reading and improving their skills. If Florida's students are going to shoot for the moon and achieve great success, they must have the literacy skills that 21st century careers demand. Florida's educators and students will continue to make strides toward increasing student achievement in literacy, and through experiences like the portable planetarium tour, students will be challenged to read every day because "Reading Accelerates Success".

For more information, visit [www.justreadflorida.com/literacyweek](http://www.justreadflorida.com/literacyweek)

# Healthy Tips for Cold and Flu Prevention

Flu is more dangerous than the common cold for children. Each year, flu places a large burden on the health and well-being of children and families. An influenza vaccination is the best method for prevention.



Each year about 20,000 children younger than five years old are hospitalized from flu complications, like pneumonia.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that all children 6 months and older get a flu vaccine.

People with the flu may be able to infect others by spreading the virus from 1 day before getting sick up to 7 days after. If your child is sick, keep them home from daycare, school or camp to avoid spreading the virus to other children or caregivers. Parents

and caregivers can encourage children to take everyday steps that can help prevent the transmission of germs.

## To prevent the spread of germs:

- ⇒ Cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue and throw the tissue in the trash.
- ⇒ Wash hands often with soap and water. If soap and water are not available, use hand sanitizer.
- ⇒ Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth. **Germs spread this way.**
- ⇒ Stay away from people who are sick.

- ⇒ If someone at home is sick, try to keep the sick person in a separate room away others in the household, if possible.
- ⇒ Keep toys, nightstands, bathrooms and kitchen counter surfaces clean by wiping them down with a household disinfectant according to directions on the product label.

## **Educational Resources:**

[Florida Department of Health Flu Prevention](#)

[KidsHealth Tips for Treating the Flu](#)

[Nick Jr. Cold and Flu Tips for Parents](#)

[The Flu: A Guide for Parents \(CDC\)](#)

For more information, visit [FDOE Healthy Schools](#)

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## Parental Involvement

November was Parental Involvement Month, a time to celebrate the important role parents play in their children's education. But parental involvement is important year-round. When schools work together with families to support learning, children are inclined to succeed not just in school, but throughout life.

The Florida Department of Education recognizes the vital roles that schools and families play throughout a child's educational career.

To help parents and families stay involved in

education, we want to share with you a few simple ways to stay engaged.

- Establish a daily family routine.
- Monitor out-of-school activities.
- Model the value of learning, self-discipline and hard work.
- Express high, but realistic expectations for achievement.

