

March

2024

Volume 10 Issue 3

# Early Learning Parents' Pages

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE DIVISION OF EARLY LEARNING

## Spring Into Healthy Eating Habits

As a parent, you support your child's nutritional needs by encouraging healthy eating habits and food choices. Healthy and balanced meals are vital for a child's growth and development.

Careful meal planning and offering healthy snack options are ways to foster good eating habits with your child. Young children learn through observation and develop healthy habits when you are mindful of the foods you buy and prepare. Children benefit from healthy food choices that develop into lifelong habits.

### Make Time for Family Mealtime

Make informed choices for mealtime by planning your meals in advance.

Balancing a weekly schedule while parenting can be challenging. Planning meals in advance can make mealtime easier while providing more time to spend with family.

- Involve your child in planning and preparing meals and snacks.
- Offer a variety of food options for your child to select, when possible, to support your child's interests and likes.
- Plan meals with a variety of healthy foods such as fresh fruits, vegetables, whole grains and meats.
- Serve your child milk or water at meals.

Eating healthy means selecting foods from each food group with the least amount of sugar or fat content. One of the eight developmental domains outlined in [Florida Early Learning and Developmental Standards](#) is Physical Development. Health and Wellbeing is a component of this domain that addresses feeding and nutrition. With your encouragement and support, your child will begin to demonstrate an increasing interest in nutritious food choices and healthy eating habits.

### Stay Active and Healthy

[The Florida Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services](#) provides food and nutrition resources for families.

Plan a fun family outing and enjoy creating lasting memories while spending time together by visiting a local U-pick farm. This is a great time to experience a local farm and walk, explore new foods and stay active. Being active is vital for a young child's growth and development.

During a visit at a U-pick farm, you will have opportunities to learn about how fruits and vegetables grow and create meaningful memories by picking fresh locally grown items.

Farms are often open on a seasonal basis. Check with your local farm before making plans to visit.

Your child learns many new skills and concepts through experiences with children or adults. Always remember their most important teacher is you.



Be sure you don't miss an issue!  
Scan the QR code  
and sign up to receive Parents' Pages.



## Selecting a Summer Camp

Summer is quickly approaching and now is the time to start looking for summer camps or programs for your child.

Summer camps and programs are available in different settings, such as school-based programs, parks and recreation programs, youth service agencies, family child care homes, specialty camps and child care centers. The Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) program offered by your [local early learning coalition](#) can provide you with a list of available summer camps in your area, including those offered by your school district.

For additional information on safety guidelines, background screening requirements and a [checklist](#) to help you make informed decisions when selecting a safe and suitable summer camp for your child, visit the website [Choosing a Safe Summer Camp | Florida DCF](#).



## 2023 Child Tax Credit!

The deadline to file your income tax return with the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) is coming up fast on **April 15th**. Do take time to consider if you may qualify for either the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) or the Child Tax Credit (CTC).

If you work, you could qualify for the EITC even if you do not have children. The CTC is available to families with a qualified child under the age of 17.

Be sure to carefully follow the instructions provided by the IRS and seek advice from a tax professional if needed.

## Reading Aloud

You can read aloud to your child any time, such as when you are going to the market, spending time together at home or on a picnic at the park.

**What does it mean to read a book aloud?** Reading aloud is reading text or a book using your voice to say the sentences. Reading with expression and using facial expressions help children develop their vocabulary, comprehension and communication skills.

As your child progresses throughout the school year, make reading aloud at least 15 minutes an important part of your child's daily routine. You can read to your baby as early as 20 weeks in the womb and continue when your child is born and throughout their early years. As your child listens to stories being read aloud, they develop emergent literacy skills.



Dramatic play is a wonderful way to practice emergent literacy skills. Have your child read to you as you pretend to be an early learner. Even if your child is sharing details about the pictures, they are practicing early reading skills. Always have several books available with topics that interest your child. Bring books when you visit the park, the doctor's office, ride on the bus, dine at a restaurant and while you shop for groceries.

Visit your local public library and speak with a librarian to locate books you can check out for your child. If you are looking for books that are appropriate for your child's age or you would like to add to your home library, check out the [Commissioner's Book of the Month](#). Begin reading with your child today and make reading an important part of your daily routine.