

# Early Learning Parents Pages

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE DIVISION OF EARLY LEARNING

## Supporting Your Child's Reading at Home

Language, communication, early literacy and writing are critical to children's ability to learn, work and play with others. Language and literacy development involves the way children learn to communicate with sounds, words and gestures and, eventually, the way they learn to read and write. Children develop language and literacy through interactions with adults and other children, engagement with materials and instructional experiences.

Your child's foundation for reading begins at infancy. Their early experiences with books and language are a foundation for later reading success. When you read, talk or play with your child, it stimulates the brain and builds connections that become the building blocks for reading. Reading aloud to your child every day increases the brain's capacity for language and literacy skills. You can find resources to better understand your child's language and literacy development as well as activity ideas under the [Families](#) tab on the [Florida Early Learning and Developmental Standards](#) website. Simply select your child's age from the drop-down menu. Here is an example of what you can find:



### IV. Language and Literacy

#### Sing, Read, Repeat

Your child enjoys listening to his/her favorite stories and songs over and over again. After singing or telling stories with your child, ask him/her if he/she wants more. How does he/she respond? Does he/she nod or squirm away? Talk about his/her actions like, "You said yes!" or "You look like you're all done."

18-24 Months (Toddlers)

#### Brainy Background

Children learn through repetition and shared back and forth conversations. Repeated storytelling and singing helps your child understand the meaning behind words and sets the stage for talking and eventually reading. He/She is learning the basics of communication!



The [Just Read, Florida!](#) initiative also offers ideas and support to families that encourage reading aloud at home.



# Healthy Reading Habits

Early literacy is one of the keys to a child's success in life, including academics. Other than helping your child to grow up happy and healthy, the most important thing that you can do for them is help them develop their reading skills. The brain grows quickly within the first five years of life, establishing early literacy skills can help a child be kindergarten-ready and create a willingness to learn.



**Check out these tips for preparing your child to read from Just Read, Florida!:**

- Point to objects and describe them as you play and do daily activities together. Having a large vocabulary gives a child a great start when entering school.
- Use sounds, songs, gestures and words that rhyme to help your baby learn about language, and its many uses.
- Point out the printed words in your home and other places you take your child such as the grocery store.



- Read to your baby every day starting at 6 months of age. It is one of the best ways to develop early literacy skills.
- Help your child see that reading is important. Set a good example for your child by reading books, newspapers and magazines.

Visit [Reading Tips for Parents](#) to discover even more tips to develop healthy reading habits with your child.

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## **VPK's New Assessment**

### *Florida's Assessment of Student Thinking (FAST) using Star Early Literacy*

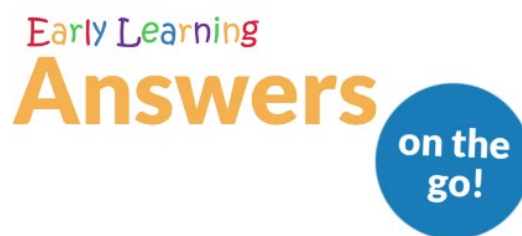
The goal of the VPK program is to help develop and nurture students' skills to be kindergarten ready. This year children in VPK will be taking Renaissance Star Early Literacy® to gauge their performance on early literacy skills and early numeracy skills as part of Florida's Assessment of Student Thinking (FAST). The assessment will be administered at least three times - the beginning, middle and end of the program year to - monitor your child's progress. The assessment can be administered more frequently as needed to ensure learning targets are being met.

Star Early Literacy is a computer-adaptive assessment taken on a computer or tablet (e.g., iPad®) and uses audio narration to read the questions to students. The questions get easier or more difficult depending on how the student responds. The assessment typically takes 15 to 20 minutes to complete. Star Early Literacy will provide important information for your child's teacher to plan instruction to meet your child's educational needs. [Click here](#) to access the Family Guide to Assessments.

There are more ways for parents and families to help young children learn and grow today than ever before. The Division of Early Learning and the University of Florida's Lastinger Center for Learning have developed videos to increase and support parent education on a variety of topics such as:

- What should my child know and be able to do?
- What is a Child Developmental Screening?
- Why is it important for my family to engage with the early learning program my child attends?

Videos are available in English and Spanish. Check them out at <http://www.floridaeearlylearning.com/family-resources/answers>.



Children learn more quickly during their early years than any other time in their life. In the first few years, more than one million new neural connections form every second within the brain.

The School Readiness program considers a child's physical, social, emotional and intellectual development and provides resources and assistance to families. The program helps prepare young children for learning.

You can [apply online](#) from a computer, laptop, tablet or smartphone by visiting the Division of Early Learning's Family Portal website.



## Florida's Tax Relief

Florida's families are being provided tax relief! The Governor and Florida Legislature delivered \$1.1 billion in tax savings for not only hurricane preparedness and back-to-school items, but also for purchases of Energy Star appliances, skilled workers' tools and even outdoor activities and events.



### Some key tax dates include:

Gas Tax Holiday, October 1 – 31, 2022

Children's Clothing and Shoes, July 1, 2022 – June 30, 2023

Children's Diapers, July 1, 2022 – June 30, 2023

You can find out more information about these and all the upcoming tax holidays by visiting <https://bit.ly/TaxHolidaysFL>.

## Contact Your County's Early Learning Coalition

Whether you want to apply for school readiness services, enroll in VPK or get information about other early education resources, the place to start is with your local early learning coalition. [Click here](#) to find your coalition.



**Are you a parent with questions about child care in Florida?**

Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) is a free, statewide program that helps families living or moving to Florida connect with community resources.

**What does the local CCR&R program do for families?**

In Florida, the Department of Education's Division of Early Learning partners with 30 regional early learning coalitions to help families connect with resources. Each coalition has a local CCR&R team that provides services to families, child care providers, employers and their communities.

**Child Care Resource and Referral Services can help your family by providing:**

- A customized list of local child care options from trained child care resource and referral specialists.
- Information about quality child care and early learning programs.
- Financial assistance strategies and opportunities.
- Referrals to other community resources and programs.

**To find out more, contact your early learning coalition:**

<http://www.floridaeearlylearning.com/parents/family-resources/find-quality-child-care/locate-your-early-learning-coalition> includes a map of the 30 coalitions. You may also call the Division of Early Learning's toll-free family line at **866-357-3239**.



**Hope Florida** – A Pathway to Prosperity is connecting families with “Hope Navigators” who can maximize community resources and opportunities! Visit the Department of Children and Families website at [bit.ly/DCFHope](http://bit.ly/DCFHope) to learn more today!

**Manny Diaz, Jr.**  
Commissioner

**Matthew H. Mears**  
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