



Parents' Pages

The Official Newsletter of the Division of Early Learning

AUGUST 2026
VOLUME 12
ISSUE 8

What Every Parent Should Know About VPK

Florida's Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) is a free program that gives children a strong, confident start to school. Children who complete VPK are more ready for kindergarten, which sets them up for future success in reading and learning. They learn important skills while having fun every day. Families interested in enrolling their child in VPK can apply online through the [Family Portal](#).

What Is VPK? VPK is a state-funded preschool program designed to prepare four-year-olds for kindergarten. Children learn through play, stories, songs, hands-on activities and daily routines that help them grow academically. VPK programs are offered at private early learning centers and public schools.

Who Is Eligible? Your child may attend VPK if they live in Florida and turn 4 years old on or before September 1 of the school year. Families can choose the VPK program that best fits their needs.

Why Does VPK Matter? VPK helps children build skills they will use in kindergarten and beyond, such as:

- Making friends and working with others
- Listening and following directions
- Recognizing letters, sounds and numbers
- Solving problems and trying new things

How Do Children Learn in VPK? VPK programs use the [Florida Early Learning and Developmental Standards](#) to guide instruction. These standards describe how young children grow and learn in everyday ways.

In VPK, children practice:

- Talking, listening and enjoying books
- Counting, sorting and noticing patterns
- Using their bodies through movement and play
- Expressing feelings and building independence

What Questions Can Help Select a Quality Provider? When visiting a VPK classroom, consider asking:

- What does a typical day in VPK look like?
- How do teachers help children get ready for kindergarten?
- How does the daily schedule balance learning and play?
- How do teachers support communication skills and friendships?
- How are families kept informed about their child's progress?

VPK is more than preschool. It's a foundation for lifelong learning when families and teachers work together to help children grow in confidence, curiosity and readiness for school. VPK helps children start kindergarten saying, "I can do this!"

Register now for VPK!

To be eligible for VPK, your child must live in Florida and be 4 years old on or before September 1. If your child's 4th birthday falls on February 2 through September 1, you can postpone enrollment until the following year when your child is 5. Register for VPK in the [Family Portal](#) and check out the [Prekindergarten Family Guide](#) for additional tips and resources for a successful program year.

Florida VPK and Florida Prepaid Unite

BIG SAVINGS FOR BRIGHT FUTURES!

Start Early. Save More.

Applying to participate in Florida's VPK program is a great beginning to investing in your child's future!

Not only is VPK proven to help your child enter kindergarten confident and ready to learn, it also opens the door to valuable financial education opportunities that can support your family's future.

- Apply for VPK and sign up for Florida Prepaid to receive a \$100 bonus to start saving for future education costs.
- Apply for VPK and sign up for Florida Prepaid to be entered for a chance to win a \$1,000 college scholarship.



Families who opt in to either opportunity are provided additional information about the options available through [Florida Prepaid](#).



Sweet Summer Fun: National Watermelon Day – August 3rd

Florida is one of the top watermelon-producing states in the country. It's the perfect time to grab a locally grown melon to share with friends and family. Whether you're slicing, grilling or turning rinds into whimsical boats, watermelon brings fun to family time.

Watermelon Rind Boats for Kids

1. Cut thick, curved wedges of the rind.
2. Poke a wooden pencil through the top center to act as a mast.
3. Slide a paper or foam triangle onto the pencil to make a sail.
4. Add small items, like plastic toys or toothpick flags to complete the ship.
5. Your boat is ready to set sail!

Conversation starters:

[Language and Literacy](#)

- What are you going to name your boat?
- What words can you use to describe your boat?
- What sounds might you hear on a boat ride?
- What might you see on a boat ride?

[Scientific Inquiry](#)

- Do you think the boat will float or sink?
- What might happen if we put more toys on the boat?
- How does the sail help the boat move?

[Mathematical Thinking](#)

- How many sails does the boat have?
- How many toys can you fit on the boat?
- What shape is your boat?



These simple activities and discussions help children develop early Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) skills while having fun with a hands-on activity.

Back-to-School Success Starts at Home

Starting school is a big step. Creating simple routines at home can help your child feel prepared and transition smoothly into the school year.

Establish Routines That Feel Safe

Children feel more confident when they know what to expect. Try to:

- Keep a regular bedtime and morning routine
- Practice getting dressed and ready on a schedule
- Talk about what the school day might look like

Why it helps: Predictable routines ease worries and help children feel in control.

Practice Everyday Independence

Little tasks build big confidence. Encourage your child to:

- Zip and unzip their backpack or jacket
- Be independent – put on shoes and wash hands
- Clean up toys when finished

Important parts of school readiness: These skills support independence, focus and problem-solving, which are important when preparing for school.

Build Writing Skills

Invite your child to:

- Trace letters with crayons, markers or fingers in the sand
- Recognize their name in print
- Write their name on artwork or cards

Tip: Perfect letters are not the goal – recognition and effort matter most.

Talk About School

It's normal for children to feel excited, nervous or both. Help by:

- Talking about how school might feel
- Naming emotions like happy, worried or proud
- Encouraging your child to ask questions

Conversation starter: You might say, "It's okay to feel a little nervous. New things may feel uncomfortable at first."

Working Together to Help Children Thrive

Building a strong partnership with your child's teacher is one of the most effective ways to support your child's learning and development. When families and teachers work together, it creates consistent expectations, shared goals and a supportive learning environment both at home and school.

Open and respectful communication is key to a successful partnership. Sharing your child's interests, strengths and needs helps the teacher understand how to guide your child, and listening to the teacher's observations gives you helpful insight into how your child learns at school. Children may behave differently at home and at school. Sharing perspectives helps you and the teacher better understand how to support your child.

Show your child that learning is important by staying involved. Attending conferences, reading classroom updates or participating in school events reinforces positive attitudes toward school and helps children feel supported and confident.

A strong family-teacher partnership also promotes the development of healthy social skills. When children see adults in their lives working together, they feel more secure and are better able to manage transitions and challenges.

By building a collaborative relationship with your child's teacher, your family creates a team approach to learning – one that supports your child's growth, success and well-being now and in the future.

Family Fun Before the School Bell Rings

As your child trades long playdays for school backpacks, they look forward to making new friends, story time and everything school surroundings have to offer. End summer with big smiles and fun activities while preparing for the first day of school.

Family Bike Ride – There's something special about a family bike ride and a sunset walk to end the day. Start with an easy ride through your neighborhood or a nearby trail, keeping the pace relaxed so everyone can enjoy the moment. As the sun begins to set, park the bikes and take a short walk together soaking in the colors of the sky, pointing out little things in nature and just being present with each other. It's a peaceful way to connect, unwind and make lasting memories as a family.



Family Mini Field Day – In your backyard or at a local park, set up simple stations like relay races, soccer dribbling, hula hoop challenges, sack races or a frisbee toss. Let each family member pick an activity, keep score just for fun and celebrate everyone's effort at the end with a sweet treat like popsicles or a small trophy. It's a great way to get moving, build teamwork and burn off energy while enjoying the fresh air.



School Tax Holiday 2026

Florida's Back-to-School Sales Tax Holiday continues through August 20. Qualifying items that can be purchased tax free include clothing, school supplies and certain tech devices.

Check out the Department of Revenue's website under Consumers for [more details on what is included](#).



September Upcoming Events

Labor Day

Monday, September 7, 2026

National Day of Service and Remembrance

Friday, September 11, 2026

Grandparents Day

Sunday, September 13, 2026

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DIVISION OF
Early Learning
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