



Parents' Pages

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Family Fun Activities for Father's Day

Father's Day is a wonderful opportunity for families to spend quality time together while supporting children's learning and development. Simple, enjoyable activities with fathers and father figures can align with the [Florida Early Learning and Developmental Standards](#) by promoting physical development, creative expression, mathematical thinking and social development.

Physical Development: One easy way to make the day special is by doing dad's favorite outdoor activities. This may be fishing, playing catch, riding bikes in a park or going on a nature walk, which helps children build balance, strength and coordination. While enjoying the outdoors, encourage your child to talk about what they noticed in the lakes and trees, types of shapes in the clouds, or the sounds they heard from animals and insects.

Creative Expression: Hands-on and creative activities are also wonderful for learning. Making a simple craft as a gift for dad, building with blocks or putting together a puzzle helps children practice problem-solving, fine-motor skills and sticking with a task even when it gets challenging. These activities also give your child a chance to learn sharing and taking turns when completing activities with others.

Mathematical Thinking: Cooking a meal together is another meaningful Father's Day activity. Measuring ingredients supports early mathematical thinking, while talking through steps strengthens language development. Most importantly, preparing a healthy and delicious meal together gives families time to connect, learn and create special memories that your child will carry with them for years to come.

Social Development: When families combine fun activities with learning moments and friends, Father's Day becomes even more special. It's not only a day to celebrate dads and father figures but also a chance to help children grow, explore and strengthen relationships.

Celebrate Children's Day, June 14



On Children's Day, celebrate the joy, creativity and imagination of young learners. Families can mark the day by enjoying simple activities together such as storytelling, making a snack, creating art or having a fun family dance party. Read your child's favorite book and ask them questions about the story, make simple snacks like fruit kabobs or cookies, and create drawings or paintings and display them as a "family art gallery" to honor the day. See who has "the moves" while playing lively music with games like freeze dance or copy-the-leader. Spending quality time together helps build strong connections and happy memories.

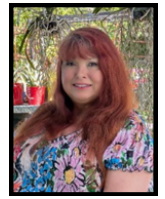
Celebrating VPK's 20th Birthday!

We would like to recognize **Melissa Mapes**. With an incredible 39 years of experience in early childhood education, including 28 years at Gingerbread School Carillon in St. Petersburg as a Pre-K/VPK teacher, Melissa is a cornerstone of her community. She has been teaching VPK since the program began twenty years ago and has positively impacted the lives of hundreds of students who have been in her classroom.

Melissa holds a Child Development Associate (CDA), a Childcare Supervisor Certificate and a Micro Literacy Credential from the University of Florida. Her deep knowledge of child development is matched only by her enthusiasm and heart for her students.

What does Melissa love most about teaching young children? "They come to school each day ready for adventure and fun! Their imaginations are amazing and they love with their whole hearts," Melissa said. She's constantly inspired by the way her students find joy in the smallest moments and how much her words and actions as a teacher matter to them.

Let's give a round of applause for Melissa, whose wisdom, heart and dedication have helped shape generations of Gingerbread learners!



**Bright
Futures
Happen
Here!**



The Division of Early Learning is proud of the 20th year of Florida's Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK), an important milestone that commemorates the success of a program that continues to make a lasting impact on children, families and communities. To continue to celebrate, the division is sharing a [VPK 20th Birthday Toolkit](#) that includes fun ideas and resources to help schools, early learning programs and families join the celebration.

VPK Registration

Do you have a 4-year-old? Your child may be eligible for Florida's VPK program. To be eligible, your child must live in Florida and be 4 years old on or before September 1 of the school year. If your child's birthday is February 2 through September 1, you can wait and enroll them the next year when they turn 5. Families are encouraged to apply. Registration for the 2026-2027 school year is happening now! To apply, visit the [Family Portal](#).

Florida VPK and Florida Prepaid Unite

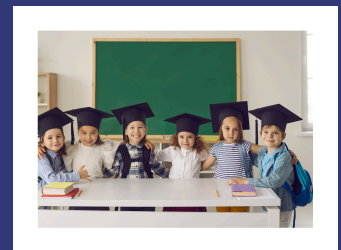
BIG SAVINGS FOR BRIGHT FUTURES!

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, but it also opens the door to valuable financial education opportunities that can support your family's future.

- Apply for VPK and receive a \$100 bonus to start saving for future education costs.
- Apply for VPK and 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](#).



IT'S OKAY TO PLAY IN VPK!

What Families Should Know About Playing with a Purpose is the first in a two-part series and is based on the [Florida Early Learning and Developmental Standards](#). The workshop introduces families to the standards as families learn why play is critical in a child's development. Families can learn to choose quality, everyday activities and environments that help get their child ready for kindergarten. For more information, contact your local [early learning coalition](#).

Next Stop, Kindergarten!

Transitioning to kindergarten is an exciting milestone for young children and their families. A kindergarten-ready family supports, encourages and celebrates the growing skills children develop during the early years. The [Florida Early Learning and Developmental Standards](#) help guide families in understanding the skills and behaviors that support children's success as they enter school.

One key step in kindergarten readiness is establishing routines and schedules. Prepare your child by practicing daily routines, building independence and talking about what to expect in a kindergarten classroom. Discussing the importance of showing respect to teachers and classmates also helps children feel confident and ready to learn. Use these tips to ensure a smooth start to kindergarten and reach out to your local school district and [early learning coalition](#) for information about upcoming transition to kindergarten events in your area.

Growing Curious Minds at Home

Young children are natural explorers. They learn best when they are encouraged to ask questions, try new ideas and express their creativity. Families play an important role in supporting curiosity at home by creating an environment where children feel safe to wonder, experiment and imagine.

One of the simplest ways to encourage curiosity is to welcome your child's questions. When children ask "why" or "how," respond with patience and interest, even if you may not have all the answers. Saying things like, "That's a great question — let's find out the answer together," shows children that learning is an exciting, shared experience.

Creative play and activities such as drawing, building with blocks, pretend play, music and storytelling allow children to express their ideas and explore the world in their own way. There is no right or wrong outcome. What matters is the process of thinking, creating and problem-solving.

Everyday moments offer opportunities for discovery. Cooking, gardening, sorting laundry or taking a walk outside can spark conversations, observations and new ideas. By talking about what they see and do, your child is building language, confidence and a love of learning.

When families encourage curiosity, questions and creativity at home, they help children develop important skills that support lifelong learning in the earliest years.



Summer Bridge

Families of eligible VPK children have an opportunity to participate in a Summer Bridge program provided by their local school district. The Summer Bridge program is designed for children who need additional support in emergent literacy and early mathematical skills to be fully ready for kindergarten. Ask your VPK provider or your [local early learning coalition](#) to see if your child qualifies for this free program.

Summer Learning & Safe Fun

June is the perfect month for outdoor exploration and hands-on learning! Families can keep children learning all summer long by taking nature walks to collect leaves, count seashells or make simple patterns in the sand. Safe water plays like sprinklers in the yard or pouring water into buckets and cups gives children a fun way to explore, experiment and build joyful memories. Summer fun and learning go hand in hand when families explore, play and create together! These playful activities are ways to engage with the [Florida Early Learning and Developmental Standards](#).

Outdoor Adventures: Take nature walks to collect leaves and talk about the different sizes, shapes and colors before sorting the leaves in small, medium and large piles. Plan a trip to the beach to count seashells that have washed onshore or make patterns in the sand.

Safe Water Play: Parents can play fun music while children run, hop and dance through a gentle sprinkler spray. This helps build coordination, strength and balance while keeping children active and engaged. Using buckets, cups and scoops allows children to explore pouring, filling and transferring water. These activities support hand eye coordination and fine motor skills.

Storytime Outdoors: Bring a few favorite books and invite your child to bring a beloved stuffed animal to a shady park, backyard or porch. Reading together outside creates a calm, enjoyable experience. Ask “Who/What/Where/Why” questions together to help your child understand the story. Reading outside makes early literacy fun and interactive and invites conversation.

Art in the Sun: On a sunny afternoon, place a leaf under a piece of paper and gently rub a crayon over the top of the paper. Children love seeing the leaf’s shape and patterns magically appear! Rock painting is another way to show artistic imagination when painting faces, patterns or simple designs. Using nature materials for art projects support creativity and fine motor skills.

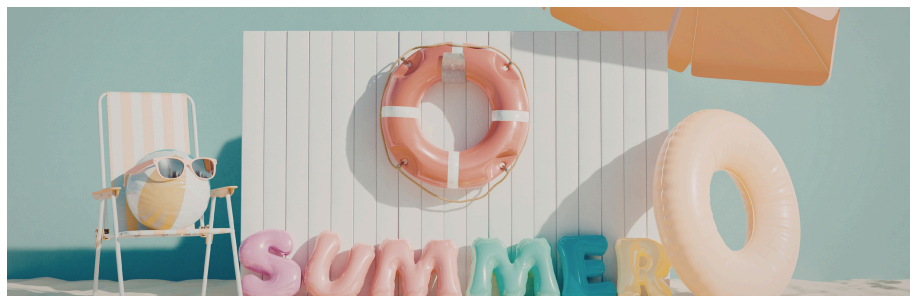
Family Games: Go on a scavenger hunt to locate flowers of the same color and then count to see who found the most flowers before placing them in a cup or vase with water. Play with sidewalk chalk by drawing shapes (circle, star, square) instead of numbers and let children hop to each shape the parent calls in a hopscotch game.

Looking Ahead to July

July brings exciting celebrations and enriching learning moments for families!

- Enjoy Independence Day (July 4) with outdoor adventures and quality time spent together.
- Celebrate America’s 250th birthday with [America 250 celebrations!](#)
- Celebrate National Ice Cream Day (July 19), a sweet summer tradition, by making fun ice cream treats.
- Look for helpful tips to get little learners and school-age children ready for the new school year.

More to come in July’s newsletter!



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DIVISION OF
Early Learning

LEARN EARLY. LEARN FOR LIFE.

CONNECT
WITH US!

