



# Parents' Pages

*The Official Newsletter of the Division of Early Learning*

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## Preparing for a New School Year *A fresh start for the whole family*

If your little one will be starting a child care or early learning program, or heading back to one at the end of summer, now is the time to begin preparing for the new school year. This is a new start for the whole family, so talk about and celebrate this milestone.

Young children do their best when they know what to expect. Talk with them about what school will be like. Use simple words to explain where they are going, who will be there and what they might do. Visit the classroom ahead of time or attend a school open house. Let your child meet the teacher, explore the classroom and get familiar with the new space.

Reading books about school can help children understand what's coming. Try titles like "The Kissing Hand" by Audrey Penn or "I am Too Absolutely Small for School" by Lauren Child.

Starting something new can bring out a lot of emotions. Some children feel excited, while others may feel nervous or unsure. These feelings are normal. Taking time to talk about upcoming new experiences helps children understand and express their feelings. Be patient and give your child time to adjust.

Whether your child is going to school for the first time, returning to a familiar classroom or starting in a new one, you can help make it fun and special by celebrating even the small milestones.

Many early learning programs in Florida will begin in August, so start thinking about ways to make the first day special. Plan to take a photo, eat a favorite breakfast or read a book together before heading out the door. These little transitions help your child feel proud and excited about starting something new.

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## Summer VPK Hooray!

Congratulations to our 2025 Summer Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) graduates! State data show that children who participate in VPK are better prepared to enter kindergarten ready to learn, and these Summer VPK graduates received 300 hours of high-quality, targeted instruction to prepare them for success in school and life. Use the [VPK graduation flyer](#) to celebrate your child's VPK success.

## Have you registered your child for the 2025-26 School Year VPK Program?

To be eligible for VPK, children must live in Florida and be 4 years old on or before September 1 of the current school year. If their 4th birthday falls February 2 through September 1 in a calendar year, parents can postpone enrolling their child in VPK that year and wait until the following year when their child is 5. Families can register their eligible child at [Early Learning Family Portal](#). Then check out the [Prekindergarten Family Guide](#) for additional tips and resources for a successful program year.

## Nurture Your Child's Interest in Learning

Use the last of these summer days to explore libraries, museums, parks, beaches and lakes to support your child's love of learning. How does such fun support their learning and development? Any activity can become an opportunity for your child to learn science, math and language and work on motor skills. Running, climbing, jumping, hopping and skipping help build muscles and develop cognitive skills such as coordination.

Your child's desire to learn motivates them to explore the world around them. Check out books from the library that interest them to keep them excited and read with them daily. Curiosity about what happens next in a book shows they are developing important cognitive skills. Many Florida museums provide hands-on activities to engage children in learning. Libraries and museums offer a cool place to explore and learn when it's hot outside. Contact your local library or museums to find out about the programs they offer.

### Explore ideas to further your child's summer learning adventures:

- Play "I Spy." This game encourages children to use all five senses in order to explore the world. **(Approaches to Learning)**
- Engage in conversations with your child while riding in the car. Ask questions about the weather or the different color vehicles they observe. **(Language and Literacy)**
- Sing summer songs or nursery rhymes with your child. **(Creative Expression Through the Arts)**
- Encourage your child to create a nature collage. Help them collect various kinds of leaves, twigs or flowers and then glue the collected items on a large piece of paper. Talk about the art work they created. **(Creative Expression Through the Arts)**

For more ideas on activities that can support your child's learning and development, visit the [Florida Early Learning and Developmental Standards](#).





## Set Your Child's Creativity Free This Independence Day

The 4<sup>th</sup> of July is an exciting time for families to connect and celebrate as well as help young children learn through play. You don't need fancy supplies or complicated plans. These simple and engaging activities are perfect for young children and support key areas of early development.

**Parade March:** Play music and let your child march around the house or yard. They can wave a paper flag or use a wooden spoon as a drumstick. Marching, clapping and moving in rhythm helps build balance, coordination and large motor skills. **(Physical Development)**

**Color Discovery Bin:** Fill a box or container with safe red, white and blue objects, such as blocks, fabric pieces or cups. Let your child explore freely. Encourage them to notice colors, sort by type or talk about what they find to strengthen their ability to focus and build curiosity. **(Mathematical Thinking)**

**Pretend Picnic:** Set out a blanket with stuffed animals or dolls and pretend to have a picnic. Children can "share" food and drinks and practice taking turns to foster kindness, patience and cooperation. **(Social Development)**

**Story and Song Time:** Read a book about America or sing patriotic songs to expand vocabulary and develop active listening skills. Here are a few book suggestions: "Good Night America" by Adam Gamble, "Hello, America" by Martha Day Zschock, or "L is for Liberty" by Wendy Cheyette Lewison. **(Social Studies)**

**Count and Sort Stars:** Cut out stars from red, white and blue paper. Help your child count them, sort them or make them into a pattern. Counting and making patterns are great ways to shape early math skills. **(Mathematical Thinking)**

**Ice Fireworks:** Freeze colored water into ice cubes. Place them in a shallow dish and watch what happens as they melt. Talk with your child about the changes they see. This activity helps children learn to observe and ask questions. **(Science Inquiry)**

**Talk About Traditions:** Show family photos or talk about how your family celebrates the 4<sup>th</sup> of July. Talk about the importance of family, food, and being together to help children embrace their sense of identity and understand the origin of the holiday. **(Social Studies)**

These easy activities support early development. Best of all, they give families a chance to play and learn together while celebrating the holiday.

## Keep Your Family Safe During Summer Heat

During these last days of summer, be aware that extreme heat can pose a serious health risk. The Florida Department of Health has tips you can follow as your family ventures outside to explore.

- Monitor Heat Warnings: Keep an eye on weather forecasts and heat advisories.
- Stay Hydrated: Make sure you and your child drink plenty of water throughout the day.
- Dress Appropriately: Wear lightweight, light-colored clothing to reflect the heat.
- Avoid Peak Heat: Limit outdoor activities during the hottest parts of the day; protect faces and heads with a hat and apply sunscreen when outdoors.
- Access Cool Spaces: Make sure you have access to air-conditioned areas.
- Emergency Plans: Have a plan in the event of power outages to ensure your family can stay cool.

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