



Family Engagement Month

Parents' Pages

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Celebrate Family Engagement Month!

November is Family Engagement Month, a time to recognize and celebrate the powerful role families play in shaping a child's learning, development and well-being. Parents and caregivers are essential partners in education, and your involvement helps your child thrive both in and out of the classroom. Family engagement leads to strong, positive relationships between your family and your child's educators and supports the growth and development of your child.

Why Family Engagement Matters

When you are actively involved, your child has greater school success through:

- Increased motivation to learn
- Fewer behavioral challenges
- Improved impulse control, attention, memory and planning

Everyday Moments Matter

You don't need extra time or fancy tools – just use daily routines to spark learning. Questions you can ask your child during mealtimes:

- What color is your fruit? Ask your child to select their favorite fruit from a bowl and tell you the color.
- What shape is your sandwich? After making a sandwich together, cut the sandwich into a square and circle. Talk about the shapes and how they are different.
- How many grapes do you have? Gather grapes in a bowl and ask your child to count the number of grapes they add to their plate.

Read, Sing, Play – Every Day

Reading with your child daily is one of the most powerful ways to boost language and literacy skills. Make time each day to:

- Read a story together
- Sing songs
- Play games that encourage imagination and connection

Make It Count!

Your local [early learning coalition](#) offers a Child Care Resource and Referral program to connect you with tools and services that support your family's needs. Celebrate Family Engagement Month by making every moment count. Your involvement makes a lasting impact!

Happy 20th Birthday VPK!

Did you know Florida was one of the first states in the country to offer free prekindergarten for all 4-year-olds regardless of family income? The Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) program starts Florida's 4-year-olds on an early path to learning and educational success. Check out the following successful VPK students who were in the inaugural 2005 class and see where they are today.



Devon Pearce

Devon started at Future Care Learning Center in Auburndale and today he holds a Bachelor's in Aerospace Engineering.

**Bright
Futures
Happen
Here!**



Brookly Blaylock

Brookly started at Kingdom Kids in Jacksonville and today is a model with the Hollister Clothing Line.



Help celebrate VPK's 20th birthday! If you have a student who participated in the 2005-2006 VPK program or know of teachers, directors or programs that have been supporting the VPK program for the past 20 years, share pictures and details with the Division of Early Learning (DEL) at VPKQuestions@del.fldoe.org.

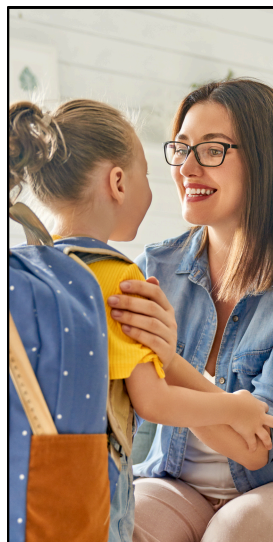
Florida Families—Is your Child Turning 4?

Do you want to help your child prepare for kindergarten? Be sure to enroll them into the [Voluntary Prekindergarten Education \(VPK\)](#) program that is available for free to all 4-year-olds living in Florida.

Data collected by the Florida Department of Education show that children who participate in VPK are much more likely to enter kindergarten ready for school. You can choose from public schools, private centers or specialized instructional services providers.

You can apply for VPK at any time during the school year. Registration for the 2026-27 program year begins January 1, 2026.

Contact your [local early learning coalition](#) or [go to the Family Portal to apply](#). For an overview of VPK, check out the [VPK Fact Sheet in English](#) and [VPK Fact Sheet in Spanish](#).



Go the Distance in VPK *Regular Attendance is Key to Success*

VPK is proven to increase a student's long-term success in school and life. Your commitment to your child's consistent attendance further contributes to their success.

This year, state law was amended to ensure every Florida child can finish VPK.

In the past, Florida law did not allow a child to re-enroll in a VPK program if they had completed more than 70 percent of the VPK program. That restriction has now been removed, so a student can reenroll in another VPK program at any time.

That means a student can move to another VPK provider and finish using their full VPK certificate (540 hours for school year or 300 hours for summer).

DEL hopes your first few months back at school have been a success and applauds your diligence in maintaining consistency in your child's attendance.

Go the distance in VPK and ensure your child attends VPK every day.

Honoring an Excellent VPK Paraprofessional

Kelsie Rodriguez is a dedicated VPK paraprofessional at Summers Elementary School in Columbia County and is currently completing certification to become a VPK instructor. She supports classroom instruction and student learning, contributing to her VPK class earning a perfect score on the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS®) observation – one of only four in the state. Beyond the classroom, she tutors K-5 students needing extra help and partners with community groups to provide essential supplies. Kelsie also leads a youth service in a high-need area of Lake City, personally walking students home afterward. Respected by colleagues and loved by students, Ms. Rodriguez exemplifies compassion, commitment and excellence in education.



Paraprofessionals in VPK classrooms are essential partners in education. They assist teachers with classroom activities, support students' needs and reinforce learning through small-group instruction. They also help foster language development and promote positive behavior, creating a nurturing environment for all children.

Kelsie was honored at a [special ceremony](#) with other Florida Distinguished Educators on September 19 at the Florida Department of Education in Tallahassee as the 2025 Florida School-Related Employee of the Year.



Celebrating Our Military Families

November is Military Family Appreciation Month, a time to honor the strength and sacrifice of those who support our nation's service members. Military families often carry the weight of long deployments, frequent moves and other challenges that military life may bring. These families also exemplify resiliency and unity that should be celebrated.

One easy way to celebrate with your child is to create a "gratitude wall" at home. Get creative with it! Hang up paper stars or hearts and encourage each family member to write or draw something they appreciate about their military family or community each day. By the end of the month, you'll have a colorful display of notes that invoke feelings of thanks and love for your military family.

This simple activity can help your child understand the importance of the service their military family members provide while also giving your family a chance to connect and reflect on their experiences. November is not just about recognizing the importance of military members but also about lifting up the families who stand beside them.



Thanksgiving Activities for Young Children

Thanksgiving is a time to celebrate togetherness. Spending meaningful time and making memories with the ones you love does not have to be expensive or complicated. In fact, some of the simplest activities done with intention and consistency are the ones your child will remember most.

Below are some Thanksgiving-themed activities in each of the key developmental areas in early childhood that you can do with your child to stimulate their mind while also creating lifelong memories.

Physical Development: Sing a turkey-themed song to the tune of “If You’re Happy and You Know It.” Add motions such as flapping wings or gobbling. This activity builds gross motor skills while letting your little one burn energy before the big meal.

Approaches to Learning: Hide small paper leaves around the house. When your child finds one, ask them to name something they are thankful for. This encourages curiosity, persistence and problem-solving.

Emotional Development: Before the meal, sit in a circle and share something for which you are thankful. Young children can use single words (such as “Mommy” or “dog”), while older siblings may share more. This promotes belonging, reflection and expression.

Language and Literacy: Read a favorite Thanksgiving story or poem like “Today is Thanksgiving” by P.K. Hallinan. Then ask your child to add their own “page” by drawing what happens next or retelling the story or poem in their own words. This builds their listening, vocabulary and narrative skills.

Mathematical Thinking: Ask your child to help set the table by counting plates, forks or napkins. Everyday routines can become math practice.

Scientific Inquiry: Fill a bowl with water and drop in cranberries. Ask your child to predict if they will sink or float. Test apple slices, toy blocks or leaves. This activity builds skills in observing, predicting and testing.

Social Studies: Show children photos of relatives who may not be at the table. Tell short stories about how they celebrated Thanksgiving in the past. Sharing builds awareness of family, traditions and history.

Creative Expression Through Arts: Collect leaves, sticks or pinecones on a short walk. Invite your child to arrange them on paper to make decorations for the table. This project fosters creativity with natural materials.

The heart of Thanksgiving traditions is creating memories together. When your child helps prepare, play, share and celebrate, they build important skills while feeling connected to family and community.

Free Resource Alert!

New Worlds Reading, administered in partnership with the University of Florida Lastinger Center for Learning, is a home literacy program that’s free for Florida’s families. Eligible students can receive nine free books (that they choose) each school year through fifth grade along with reading activities to help boost their reading skills.

Apply for your child to join New Worlds Reading while in VPK! Even if your child isn’t eligible for the program right now, New Worlds Reading will keep your application on file. If your child ever becomes eligible, then New Worlds Reading will begin automatically sending them books.

You can learn more and apply at newworldsreading.com.

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