



Parents' Pages

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How Florida's Early Learning Standards and Assessments Work Together

Fall is an exciting time in early learning classrooms. Children are meeting new friends, learning new routines and exploring their classrooms. It is also the time when teachers use standards for lesson planning and begin assessments to learn more about each child's skills and development.

In this month's Parents' Pages, you will find articles on the [Florida Early Learning and Developmental Standards \(FELDS\)](#) and the Voluntary Prekindergarten assessment, [Florida Assessment of Student Thinking \(FAST\) Star Early Literacy](#). Together, the standards and assessment play an important role in supporting Florida's strong early learning programs by helping to assess development, guide instruction and measure progress.

Early learning standards are important goals that help teachers and families support young children as they grow and learn. Standards describe the skills and knowledge children are expected to develop during their early years. They help teachers plan lessons and activities that prepare children for future success in school.

Early learning assessments are different from the tests that older students take in school. Teachers gather information by watching children play, work together and take part in classroom activities. These observations help teachers understand how children learn and grow.

During the fall, teachers observe language skills, early reading and math abilities, social skills and physical development to help identify children who need support.

Teachers also pay attention to children's interests and strengths. The information collected helps teachers plan lessons and activities that meet the needs of every child.

Families are an important part of the assessment process. Parents and caregivers can share information about their child's interests, abilities and experiences observed at home. When families and teachers work together, they can better support each child's individual needs.

YAY! FOR LABOR DAY



Labor Day is an important holiday in the United States. It is observed on the first Monday in September to celebrate the hard work and achievements of all working people. It is more than just a long weekend or the end of summer. It is a time to recognize and thank the millions of workers who help our communities every day. Teachers, doctors, construction workers, office employees and many others use their skills and talents to make our country a better place. Labor Day reminds us that every job plays an important role in building strong families, schools and communities.

Understanding Florida Early Learning and Developmental Standards (FELDS)

[FELDS](#) are a framework of eight domains that outline age-appropriate milestones and skills for children from birth to age five. They help both teachers and parents understand a child's development, track progress and support early learning to prepare children for kindergarten.

Why FELDS matter

- Give clear, research-based goals for young children.
- Help teachers plan lessons and activities.
- Encourage parents to help their child learn at home.
- Identify when a child might need extra help.

How parents can use FELDS at home

- Focus on the big ideas, not every detail.
- Turn everyday moments into learning - count stairs, talk about the weather and take turns.
- Play and talk with your child often. Play is how young children learn best.

Talk with your child's teacher

- Ask how they use the standards.
- Request examples of your child's classroom activities and how to do them at home.
- Find out how they check progress and how often you'll hear about it.

What the standards look like

The standards describe what most children can do at different ages, not a strict checklist, since every child develops at their own pace. The standards help parents and caregivers choose activities that match each child's developmental level.

FELDS are a great tool to help children grow and start kindergarten prepared. As a parent, daily talking, playing, reading and encouragement are the most important parts of your child's early development.



VPK Eligibility and Registration

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](#).



Florida Assessment of Student Thinking (FAST) Star Early Literacy Assessment - How to Support Your Child

As your child begins Florida's Voluntary Pre-kindergarten (VPK) program, their teacher will learn more about their early reading skills through the [FAST Star Early Literacy](#) assessment. One of the first checkpoints in the program year is Progress Monitoring 1 (PM1). There will be two other checkpoints during the middle (PM2) and end of the school year (PM3) to assess your child's learning gains.

These short assessments help teachers understand what children already know and what skills they are ready to learn next. Each assessment usually takes less than 15 minutes and adjusts to each child's responses. The goal is not to "pass" a test, but to help teachers support each child's learning and growth.

Families can help children feel confident and ready by building early literacy skills at home through everyday conversations, shared reading and play.

What Skills Are Measured

FAST Star Early Literacy helps teachers understand how children are developing important early reading skills. Practicing these skills at home in fun ways can help strengthen your child's confidence and love of learning.

Talk, Play and Explore Words

Children learn language best through everyday experiences. Simple conversations and playful activities help build the skills children need for reading.

You can try these creative activities to help your child hear and understand the sounds in words:

- Singing songs and nursery rhymes
- Playing rhyming games
- Clapping syllables in words
- Talking about your surroundings

Learning to Adapt

It's normal for children to feel curious or even a little unsure when trying something new. Let your child know that the assessment is just another way their teacher learns about them. Encourage them to relax, listen carefully and try their best. Your support and encouragement help build confidence and a positive attitude toward learning.

Parents Are a Child's First Teacher

The small moments you spend reading, talking and playing with your child each day help build the skills they need for success in VPK, kindergarten and beyond.

Grandparents' Day - Celebrate Connection Across Generations

Grandparents' Day (September 13) is a special opportunity to create lasting memories. Whether you're planning a small family gathering, a classroom event or a virtual celebration, here are some activities that grandparents and grandchildren of all ages can enjoy.

Activity Ideas

- **Crafts:** Make footprint or handprint art and then compare the difference in shape and size between them; decorate picture frames or bookmarks.
- **Music Fun:** Sing favorite songs together, dance, clap rhythms or do a simple sing-along.
- **Outdoor Adventure:** Visit a local park or plant a small tree or flowerbed together. Arrange a picnic with finger foods and a cozy blanket.
- **For Distant Families:** Schedule a themed video call with story time, a show-and-tell or a shared craft. Mail a handwritten card or a special craft to show love and appreciation.

Grandparents' Day is less about grand events and more about shared time and attention. Choose a few activities that honor stories, skills and affection. The memories and connections you create will be the most cherished gifts for both grandparents and grandchildren.



Growing Strong: Resiliency, Mentorship and Citizenship in Early Learning

Children are learning much more than their ABCs and 123s in their early years. They also learn how to handle challenges, learn from others and be kind members of their community. These skills help children grow into confident, caring individuals.

Resiliency is a child's ability to keep going when things feel hard. Maybe a block tower falls or a puzzle piece won't fit. While it can be tempting to step in right away, these moments are powerful learning opportunities. When children learn they can overcome challenges, they build confidence that lasts a lifetime.

You can support resiliency by:

- Encouraging your child to try again and praise their effort, not just the result
- Using phrases like "You're getting better each time" or "Mistakes help us learn"
- Sharing stories about times you didn't succeed right away and what you learned

Mentorship doesn't have to be formal. In early learning, it often looks like children learning from older siblings, classmates, teachers and caring adults. Even young children can be mentors by helping a friend clean up or showing someone how to zip a jacket. These moments teach children the value of guidance, kindness and working together.

To encourage mentorship:

- Celebrate teamwork at home
- Encourage your child to help others and ask for help when needed
- Point out positive role models in your child's life

Citizenship starts early. It's about learning respect, responsibility and care for others and the world around us. Simple actions like taking turns, following rules and helping a neighbor lay the foundation for strong citizenship skills. When children feel they belong and can make a difference, they grow into thoughtful and responsible citizens.

You can nurture citizenship by:

- Encouraging care for the environment, like picking up litter or recycling a bottle
- Involving your child in simple family responsibilities, like cooking or doing laundry
- Talking about and demonstrating kindness, fairness and sharing

Resiliency, mentorship and citizenship develop through everyday experiences at home, during play and at school. By modeling these behaviors and celebrating small successes, you help your child build a strong foundation for learning and life. Together, families and educators can help children grow strong, learn kindness and get ready to take on the world one step at a time!



NEVER FORGET
SEPTEMBER 11

Since 2001, the National Day of Service and Remembrance is observed each year on September 11. It is a day to reflect on those we have lost and to recognize the bravery of those who helped others. People across the country are encouraged to do acts of kindness in their communities. Helping others teaches your child compassion and the value of making a positive difference in their community.



OCTOBER UPCOMING EVENTS

Florida Disability History and Awareness Weeks
Head Start Awareness Month
National Chili Month
[Safe Sleep Month](#)

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Commissioner of Education



Katerina Maroney
Chancellor of Early Learning



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