



Parents' Pages

The Official Newsletter of the Division of Early Learning

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July Fun for Families

This Fourth of July marks the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence. Many communities have parades, picnics and fireworks to celebrate. Families can join in the fun by making crafts for this special holiday. Here are some hands-on activities that can help your child learn based on the [Florida Early Learning and Developmental Standards](#).

Star Stick Wand:

Cut out star shapes from cardstock and attach them to craft sticks. Decorate with glitter, stickers and ribbons to wave during celebrations or to the sounds of the marching bands. ([Physical Development](#))

Red, White and Blue Handprint Art:

Use washable paint to create handprint designs in patriotic colors on paper. Turn them into flags, fireworks or abstract art. ([Creative Expression](#))

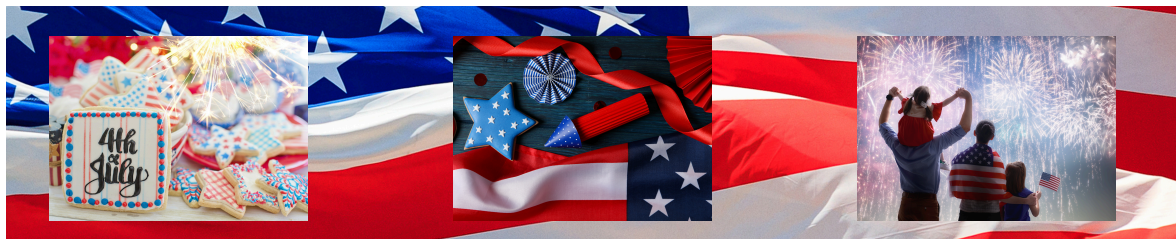
Coffee Filter Fireworks:

Color coffee filters with washable markers, then spray lightly with water to watch the colors blend like fireworks. ([Scientific Inquiry](#))

Whether you choose a big adventure or simple play in the backyard, July offers many opportunities for fun and laughter. With good planning, safety and a little creativity, you can enjoy a month full of great memories.

UV Awareness Month

July is UV Awareness Month, a great time to remind families about the importance of being safe during summertime fun. Protecting young children from harmful UV rays helps keep their skin healthy now and in the future. Simple habits like wearing hats and light cotton or breathable clothing, applying sunscreen, and playing in the shade, can make outdoor adventures more enjoyable. Build sun-smart habits to keep your little ones protected all summer long!



Looking Back on the 2025-26 School Year

VPK's 20th Birthday: Celebrating 20 Years of Early Learning

During the 2025-26 school year, Florida proudly celebrates the 20th birthday of the Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) Education Program. The celebration is honoring two decades of providing free, high-quality prekindergarten education to more than 3.1 million children. Through classroom celebrations, family engagement activities and the [VPK 20th Birthday Toolkit](#), educators and families reflect on the program's lasting impact on kindergarten readiness and lifelong success. Thank you to the educators, families and community partners who join us in celebrating this milestone and supporting early learning in Florida.



ELC of Marion County



ELC of Brevard County



ELC of Duval County



ELC of Alachua County



ELC of Miami-Dade-Monroe

Family Engagement Month 2025

November was Family Engagement in Education Month. The Division of Early Learning recognized this month as an opportunity to highlight the important role both child care providers and families play in a child's education. Family engagement toolkits for families and providers were shared with early learning coalitions to support local activities and reinforce that family engagement is a priority in early education settings. When educators and families work together to support learning, children are more likely to stay engaged and achieve success in school and throughout their lives.

Celebrate Literacy Week, Florida! 2026

Celebrate Literacy Week took place January 26–30, 2026 with the theme “Read, White and Blue: Celebrating 250 Chapters of America.” The Division of Early Learning, educators and families participated in simultaneous reading activities across the state to highlight the importance of early literacy in child development. Thank you to the families, educators and volunteers who helped foster a love of reading and made literacy a shared celebration.



Children's Week Florida™

Children's Week Florida™ celebrated its 31st year at the Florida Capitol, February 22–27, 2026. The theme for the annual event, “Building Blocks for Every Child,” brought together children, families, educators and advocates to honor Florida's children. Signature events included the Hanging of the Hands and Children's Day, where Storybook Village promoted literacy through interactive storytelling and hands-on activities. Thank you to all the participants, volunteers and partners whose dedication and advocacy helped make this week inspiring and impactful.



Provider Appreciation Day 2026

The Division of Early Learning acknowledged Provider Appreciation Day on May 8, 2026. It is a day to recognize and thank child care providers, teachers and educators who work with young children. Taking time to say thank you helps providers know their hard work matters.



How to Prepare Your Child for Preschool

Starting early gives your child a joyful launch into school filled with confidence, curiosity and a love of learning! Here are some fun, everyday ways families can support learning by incorporating the [Florida Early Learning and Developmental Standards](#):

Read Together - Reading with your child for 15 minutes each day helps build vocabulary, listening skills and a love for stories. Talk about the pictures, ask questions about the story and point out letters and words at home or while out in the community. ([Approaches to Learning](#))

Encourage Independence - Let children help with daily routines such as dressing, brushing teeth, setting the table or putting away toys. Teach responsibility through small chores and allow extra time to complete the task before stepping in to help. Encourage problem-solving by asking questions like, "What do you think you could try next?" ([Social Studies](#))

Play Math Games - Turn playtime into learning time by counting toys, stacking blocks or sorting snacks by color or size. These simple activities help children understand numbers, patterns and problem-solving. ([Mathematical Thinking](#))

Establish Routines - Daily routines like morning songs, cleanup rhymes or bedtime stories help children know what to expect. Sing songs with rhymes and movement to support language development, memory and self-control. ([Language and Literacy](#))

Create a Goodbye Plan - Ask your child to help create a goodbye routine, such as a hug, wave or special phrase that assures them of your return at the end of the school day. Keeping goodbyes short and consistent helps children feel confident and calm. ([Physical Development](#))

Ask your child's teacher how you can support classroom learning at home. Remember that when families and teachers work together, children thrive!

Math & Literacy Boosters Before School Starts

Helping your child build early math and reading skills before kindergarten can help them feel confident, prepared and excited to learn. The [Florida Early Learning and Developmental Standards](#) (FELDS) lists the skills children should practice so that they are ready for school.

Fun activities during everyday routines are a great way to incorporate early learning. Language and reading skills can be learned by reading a short book together, singing rhyming songs or talking about plans for the day. Ask your child what they think will happen next in a book or help them find letters from their name. You can also place labels on household items and ask your child to match the labels to the correct objects. Leaving the labels on items helps children learn sight words naturally. These activities grow their vocabulary and listening skills.

Some ways you can work on math skills are by counting steps while walking to the car, sorting socks by color or size, looking for shapes around the house or comparing which group has "more" or "less." You can even set a timer while your child brushes their teeth so they can watch the numbers count down for two minutes. These small activities help children connect math to real life.

Adding math and reading activities to your day can help your child practice important FELDS skills in enjoyable ways.

Summer VPK Graduation

Congratulations to our 2026 Summer Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) graduates, and thank you to our VPK families and teachers for supporting your children's early learning journey! Tell friends and family members about this achievement and encourage your child as they transition to kindergarten by using the following resource:

- [Parent Guide for Kindergarten English Language Arts](#)

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 of the current school year. If your child's 4th birthday falls on February 2 through September 1 in a calendar year, 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, but 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](#).



Prepare Healthy Lunches

Preparing healthy lunches together is a thoughtful way for you and your child to build healthy habits, spend time together and work on skills from the [Florida Early Learning and Developmental Standards](#). When children help with meals, they become more interested in food and may be more willing to try new things.

Meal planning together can also support language and reading development. Talking about ingredients, textures and tastes helps children learn new words. It also encourages them to ask questions, share their opinions and follow directions.

Simple tasks like washing fruits, spreading ingredients or opening containers help build fine motor skills. Children also learn how foods that are healthy help their bodies grow strong and give them energy.

Use the recipe below to create a delicious Pita Pizza with your favorite toppings.

Pita Pizza:

- 1 pita
- 2 tablespoons of pizza sauce or marinara sauce
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup of cheese (pick your favorite or mix more than one)
- 1 cup of favorite toppings

Topping Ideas:

- Proteins: ham, pepperoni, chicken, hamburger and sausage
- Veggies: bell peppers, mushrooms, olives, pineapple, spinach and tomatoes
- Fun and Creative: french fries, hot dogs (sliced), mac & cheese, marshmallows and pickles

Cooking Instructions:

Heat oven to 400 degrees and place pizza(s) on a pan. Then, cook for 10-15 minutes until desired toastiness.

Routine meal prep activities help children practice important skills while nurturing healthy eating habits that can last a lifetime.



National Ice Cream Day, July 19

National Ice Cream Day is a sweet summer celebration that families can enjoy together! Try making homemade ice cream in sealable bags and let your child help you grocery shop for fun toppings like sprinkles, chocolate or caramel syrup, whipped cream and cherries. For a lighter treat, use frozen yogurt cups and add fresh fruits such as strawberries, blueberries, coconut or kiwi. Non-dairy options and plant-based ice cream made from almond milk, coconut milk, oat milk or soy milk are delicious alternatives and can be topped in the same fun way. It's an easy way to stay cool, spend time together and enjoy an ice cream sundae in honor of the holiday!

What You'll Need:

- 1 cup of half-and-half (or whole milk for a lighter version)
- 2 tablespoons sugar
- ½ teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1 cup of ice
- ⅓ cup of rock salt (or kosher salt)
- 1 small sealable bag (sandwich size)
- 1 large sealable bag (gallon size)
- Optional toppings: sprinkles, chocolate chips, fruit



Instructions:

In the small sandwich bag, combine milk, sugar and vanilla. Seal tightly. Fill the large gallon bag halfway with ice and sprinkle the salt over the ice. Place the small sandwich bag inside the large gallon bag and seal completely. Use a towel or gloves to shake, squeeze and roll the bag for 5–10 minutes. Then, enjoy the delightful treat!

School Tax Holiday 2026

Florida's Back-to-School
Sales Tax Holiday is
July 20 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](#).



Looking Ahead to August

Back to School

Get ready for the new school year!
Help children prepare by setting
routines, organizing backpacks and
talking about what to expect. Next
month, look for ways to support
learning, routines and confidence as
your child settles into the school
year.

Don't miss an issue!
Scan the QR code and [sign up](#)
[to receive Parents' Pages.](#)



Paul O. Burns
Interim Commissioner of Education



Cari Miller
Chancellor of Early Learning



DIVISION OF
Early Learning
LEARN EARLY. LEARN FOR LIFE.

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WITH US!**

