



# Parents' Pages

*The Official Newsletter of the Division of Early Learning*

SEPTEMBER 2025  
VOLUME 11  
ISSUE 9

## Reading Builds a Strong Foundation for Language, Learning and Future Success

Early literacy begins long before a child can read on their own. It starts with them listening, looking at books and talking with caregivers. Reading to your child every day will boost your child's vocabulary, memory and attention span and strengthen the bond between you. Below are recommended books and activities you can do with your child to support early literacy at each stage of your child's development:

### Birth to 8 Months

#### ***"Look, Look!" by Peter Linenthal***

Hold the book close to your baby and slowly turn the pages. Point to the bold black-and-white images and talk softly about what you see. Babies love hearing your voice and watching the expressions on your face.

### 8 to 18 Months

#### ***"Where's Spot?" by Eric Hill***

Ask simple questions like "Where's the dog?" as you lift the flaps. Let your baby help turn the pages and explore the book with their hands.

### 18 to 24 Months

#### ***"Dear Zoo" by Rod Campbell***

Make animal sounds together and act out the movements. This helps connect words with meaning and makes story time fun and engaging.

### 2 to 3 Years

#### ***"Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?" by Bill Martin Jr. and Eric Carle***

Repeat the phrases together and let your child finish the sentences. Books with repeated phrases build memory and support early speech.

### 3 to 4 Years

#### ***"If You Give a Pig a Pancake" by Laura Numeroff***

Take turns coming up with what the pig will want next. This builds imagination and conversation skills.

### 4 to 5 Years

#### ***"Shapes in the Kitchen" by Tracey Steffora***

After reading, draw a picture of shapes you find in your own kitchen. Connecting stories to real life deepens your child's understanding and vocabulary.

Making reading part of a daily routine at every age helps children build confidence and curiosity. Whether it's five minutes or 30, the time spent reading with your child has lifelong benefits.

# Celebrating the 20<sup>th</sup> Birthday of Florida's Voluntary Prekindergarten Education Program!

As the Division of Early Learning (DEL) continues to celebrate the 20<sup>th</sup> birthday of Florida Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK), we would like to recognize the following VPK students from 2005. The VPK program helped to prepare these students for kindergarten and beyond. Congratulations to each of them on their educational and career success!

For more information on the VPK program and how to register your 4-year-old for VPK visit [What is Florida's Voluntary Prekindergarten Education Program \(VPK\)?](#)



**Daniel Esteban**

Daniel started at Kids Paradise Child Care & Learning Center in Miami and today is a Sports Agent with Rosenhaus Sports.

**Bright  
Futures  
Happen  
Here!**



**Zoe Smith**

Zoe started at Future Care Learning Center in Auburndale and today is an Entrepreneur.

## Tips for a Successful School Year at Home and in the Classroom

A new school year is like opening a brand-new book—full of adventures, friends and fun things to learn! Here are some easy and fun ways to help your child learn and thrive throughout the school year.

### At Home: Get Ready Like a Superstar!

- **Make bedtime cozy:** Try a bedtime story, a warm bath or a cuddle with a favorite stuffed animal to help your child wind down. Avoid screens at least 30 minutes before lights out.
- **Pick clothes together:** Let your child help choose their outfit the night before – it makes mornings faster and more fun!
- **Morning magic:** Use a fun checklist with pictures (like brushing teeth, getting dressed and eating breakfast) to help your child feel proud and independent.
- **Pack a “power breakfast”:** Include something they love – like fruit, yogurt or a smiley-faced pancake to start the day with energy.
- **Create a homework corner:** Decorate a small space with crayons, pencils and stickers where your child can focus and feel special while doing their work.

### At School: Be a Learning Hero!

- **Build strong connections:** Introduce yourself to your child's teacher early on and keep the lines of communication open throughout the year.
- **Talk about their day:** Ask fun questions of your child like “What made you smile today?” or “Did you learn something cool?”
- **Make new friends:** Encourage your child to say “Hi!” to someone new or invite a classmate to play.
- **Join the fun:** Attend school events or volunteer when you can – kids love seeing their family at school.
- **Celebrate little wins:** Give high-fives, stickers or do a special dance when your child tries their best or learns something new.

With love, routines and a little fun, your child will feel confident and ready to shine. Keep cheering them on, and they'll have a fantastic year!

## Hurricane Season Midway Check-In

There is still time to make sure your family is disaster ready, and it is especially important to do so if you have little ones at home.

### Before the Storm

Let your kids help pick out items for your emergency kit and restock necessities. Here are some essentials:

- Important papers: Birth certificates, medical records and insurance information in a waterproof container.
- Comfort items: Favorite toys, books, games and stuffed animals to help your child feel safe.
- Everyday needs: Diapers, wipes, clothes, blankets and pillows.
- Food and drinks: Non-perishable snacks, bottled water and boxed juices.
- Safety supplies: Flashlights, batteries, bug spray, sunscreen and a weather radio.
- Special needs: Medications, medical equipment and anything else your child needs daily.
- Local evacuation routes: Know them and keep them in your kit.

### During the Storm

If you need to go to a shelter, hotel or a friend's house, the toys and games you packed in your family emergency kit will help keep your kids calm and entertained. Stick together and remind them that you've planned ahead to keep everyone safe.

### After the Storm

- Stay informed: Listen to local news for updates and safety instructions.
- Reassure your kids: They might feel scared or confused. Let them know it's okay to feel that way and remind them how well your family is prepared.
- Get support: If anyone in your family needs help coping, reach out to local counselors or health professionals.

Check out the [Florida Emergency Preparedness Guide](#) for more helpful tips and resources.

## Baby Safety Month: Simple Steps Make a Big Difference

September is recognized as Baby Safety Month, a time dedicated to bringing awareness to parents and caregivers on ways to keep babies safe. Each year, thousands of infants are hurt in preventable accidents, from falls to choking hazards, but simple safety steps can make a big difference.

The following are just a few tips parents and caregivers can take to keep babies safe:

- Check car seats, strollers, cribs and other baby gear to make sure each item meets current safety standards.
- Follow the instructions that come with each product and register them, so manufacturers know who to contact if the baby gear is recalled.
- Check toys often and throw them out right away if anything breaks or does not work properly. Even small cracks or loose parts can create serious risks.
- Use safety gates at stairways, secure furniture to walls and keep small objects out of reach before babies start to explore.
- Prepare for emergencies by learning infant cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and first aid. Contact your local Red Cross for more information on these classes at [www.redcross.org](http://www.redcross.org).

For more tips, visit the Florida Department of Health's website at [Safe Kids Florida | Florida Department of Health](#).



# Celebrate Grandparents Day - Sunday, September 7, 2025

On Grandparents Day, take a moment to honor the extraordinary role grandparents play in their grandchildren's lives. From sharing stories and offering guidance to taking on caregiver roles such as driving their grandchildren to school, activities and appointments, grandparents are everyday heroes.

These caregiving responsibilities can be rewarding and also challenging. Following are some resources that support their important role:

## Resources to Support Grandparent Caregivers:

- [Florida Early Learning and Developmental Standards](#) - Learn more about skills children should do at different ages, explore age-appropriate activities and track developmental milestones.
- **The Child Care Resource and Referral** program assists grandparents, relatives and caregivers with valuable resources and information. Contact your [early learning coalition](#) to learn more.

Take time to let the grandparents in your life know that they are valued and appreciated. Help your child create a thank-you letter, video or photo scrapbook, or plan a special day or dinner together. By including your child in it, it will become a treasured memory for all.



## Looking ahead to October...

### Celebrate Head Start Awareness Month

October is Head Start Awareness Month – a time to highlight and honor the impactful work [Head Start and Early Head Start](#) programs do every day to support Florida's children and families. Next month, we invite you to celebrate the spirit of Head Start by sharing stories, attending events or simply taking a moment to recognize the dedicated educators, staff and families who make it all possible.

**Don't miss an issue!**  
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**and sign up to**  
**receive Parents'**  
**Pages.**



[Sign up to receive Parents' Pages.](#)



## Family Fun Early Literacy Activities

Do you want to supplement what your child learns in school? Try these fun literacy activities:

1. **Alphabet Treasure Hunt:** Take alphabet cards or sticky notes with letters written on them, hide them around the house or yard and give your child a list of letters to find. When they find a letter, ask them to say the letter and then say a word that starts with that letter.
2. **Letter Soup:** Gather a large bowl, spoon and plastic letters or paper cutouts. Place the letters in the bowl to make "alphabet soup." Have your child use a spoon to scoop out a letter. Ask them to name the letter and say a word that starts with the letter.
3. **Family Book Picnic:** Gather a blanket, some snacks and a few favorite picture books. Set up a picnic in the back yard or living room. Take turns reading books while asking questions like "What do you think will happen next?" or "How do you think the character feels?" Let young children "read" by describing the pictures or retelling the story in their own words.

For more language and literacy benchmarks and activity suggestions, go to the [Florida Early Learning and Developmental Standards](#) web page.



Anastasios Kamoutsas  
Commissioner of Education



Cari Miller  
Chancellor of Early Learning



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