



VPK Classrooms Begin the Year with Connection and Care

This August, ELC of Polk visited several VPK programs across Polk County to see how classrooms were welcoming children and families into the new school year. At each stop, one theme came through clearly: children learn best when they feel comfortable, welcomed, and ready to participate.

Helping Children Feel Welcome

One VPK teacher shared, *"I'm excited to get to know the children because each one is so unique, and some needed a little extra time to adjust during that first week."* To help the class settle in, she read *The Kissing Hand* by Audrey Penn, a gentle story about Chester, a young raccoon who feels nervous about starting school. In the story, Chester's mother kisses his palm so he can press his hand to his cheek whenever he misses her and remembers that he is loved.

Flexibility Supports Growth

Another VPK teacher spoke about the value of staying flexible. *"We learned a lot from last year. No matter what happens in the classroom, we'll go with the flow,"* she said. *"We faced a few challenges, but those experiences helped us*

grow. We even created new tools, like strategy cards, and found better ways to reinforce classroom rules."

Throughout the visits, teachers emphasized the importance of learning each child's personality, needs, and interests. Those early connections help create classrooms where children feel confident, build relationships, and have meaningful opportunities to learn and grow.

New Tools Create Conversation

At one childcare program, teachers were especially excited to introduce the new Frog Street Curriculum, one of the new initiatives from the Early Learning Coalition of Polk County. When the teacher brought out Fannie, a puppet from the curriculum, the children quickly began sharing the names of their brothers, sisters, and pets. One child proudly pointed out, "Fannie is for the 4-year-olds!"

Building the Foundation for Learning

Each visit highlighted the power of joyful conversations and strong relationships. It all begins with high-quality interactions that help every child feel confident, comfortable, and connected in their learning.

For families and providers, the reminder is simple: social-emotional development is not separate from learning. It is the foundation for learning, growth, and success.

Here's to a new school year filled with meaningful connections, joyful conversations, and children who are ready to learn and thrive!

With gratitude, The ELC of Polk Team



BULLETIN

ELC POLK 3RD ANNUAL EARLY LEARNING CONFERENCE



WHEN & WHERE

Saturday, September 12

8:30 AM - 3:30 PM

First United Methodist Church
and Preschool

72 Lake Morton Drive
Lakeland, FL 33801

REGISTRATION

\$40 cost includes:

- A lunch and giveaways
- A training certificate for 6 hours AND 0.5 CEU's at no additional cost
- Networking with education leaders and colleagues
- Enjoy beautiful Lake Morton!

**50%
OFF**

Use coupon code
FRIEND50
when registering



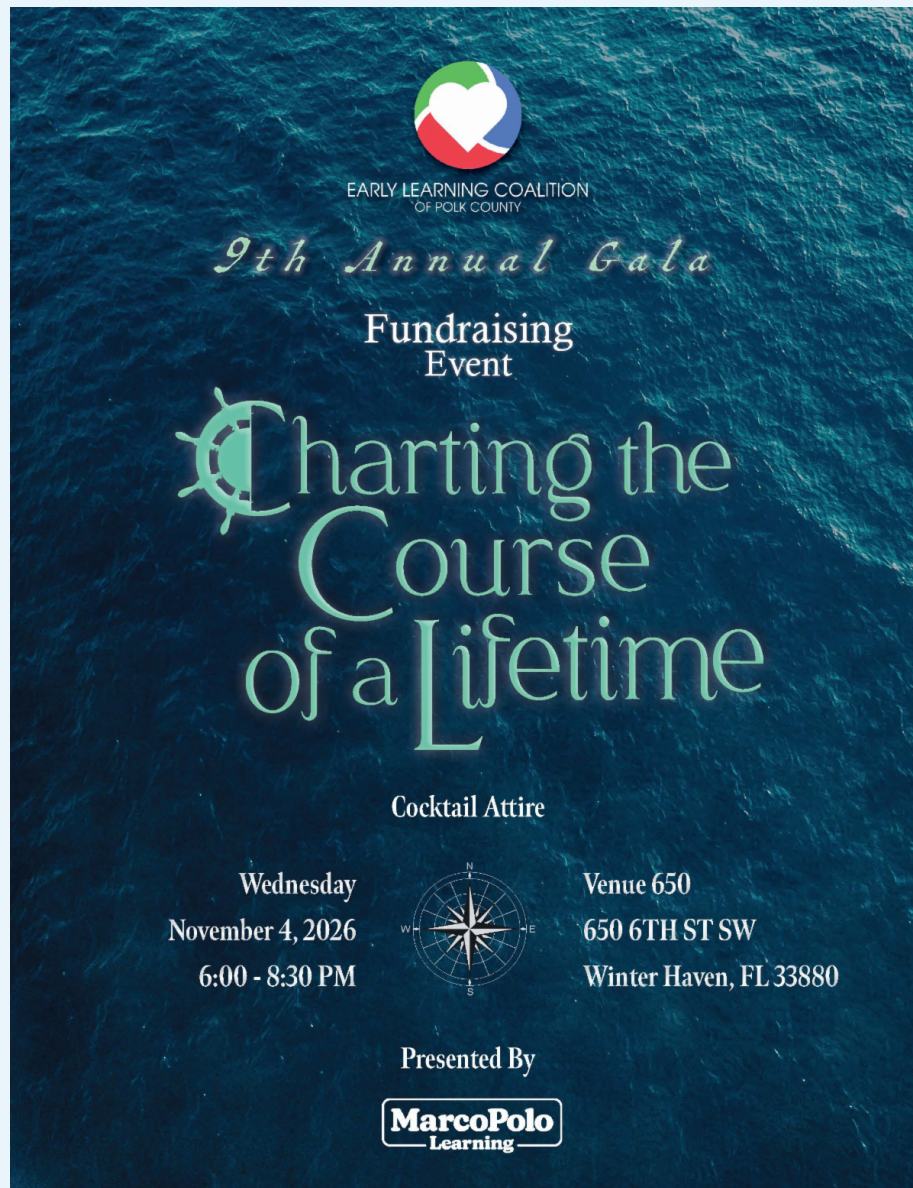
EARLY LEARNING COALITION
OF POLK COUNTY

Click or scan to register
ELCPolk.org/Conference



HIGHLIGHTS & IMPACTS 🌟

⚓ Charting the Course of a Lifetime



**We're getting ready for our 9th Annual Gala:
Charting the Course of a Lifetime!**

This special evening brings our community together in celebration of the people and partnerships dedicated to supporting young children and families across Polk County. From your child's earliest learning experiences, the Early Learning Coalition of Polk County is committed to connecting with families, building trusted relationships, and providing essential support and resources every step of the way.

These early connections help lay a strong foundation for learning, growth, and your child's future success. Together, our families, providers, and community partners are charting the course for a lifetime of learning. 🚢

Join us in celebrating the impact we create together! Visit elcpolk.org to become a sponsor or purchase your tickets for our 9th Annual Gala today.

FAMILY NEWSROOM

Why Attendance Matters in VPK!

Why Every Day Counts in VPK!



ROUTINE POWER

Daily attendance helps your child master transitions and adapt to schedules (flexible thinking).



FRIENDSHIP PRACTICE

Play-based learning helps children practice waiting, taking turns, and managing big feelings (self-regulation).



MEMORY WORKOUTS

Group activities like "Circle Time" guides the brain to listen and follow multi-step directions (working memory).



STRONG FOUNDATIONS

Regular attendance helps children build strong social and language skills while expanding their vocabulary through everyday learning experiences.



SAFE & SECURE

Predictable school routines create a safe environment that supports healthy brain development.

*Be here today, 
Build a better tomorrow.*



ARTICLES & TIPS

10 Ways to Salvage a bad Morning with Your Kids

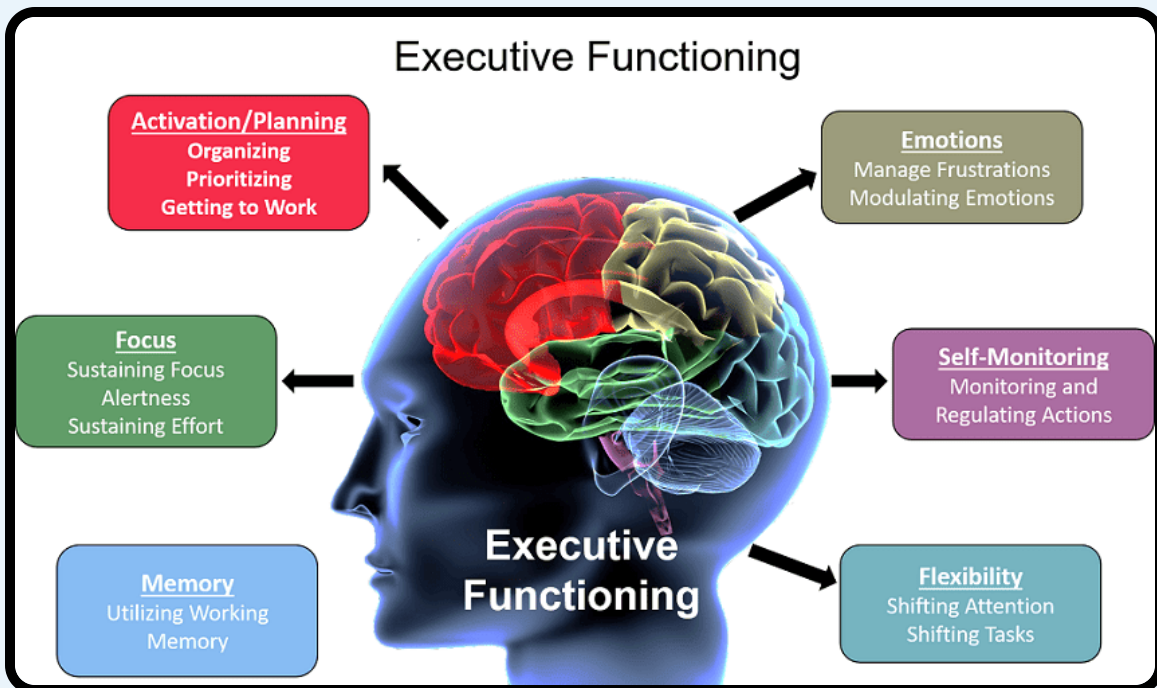


Have you ever had one of those grumpy mornings where everything feels hard and the rest of the day just seems a little off? Morning meltdowns happen, but a little peace, compassion, humor, and connection can make a big difference.

Click below to discover 10 simple ways to turn those tough morning moments into a more positive start to the day!

10 Ways to Salvage a Bad Morning with Your Kids

InBrief: Executive Function: Skills for Life and Learning



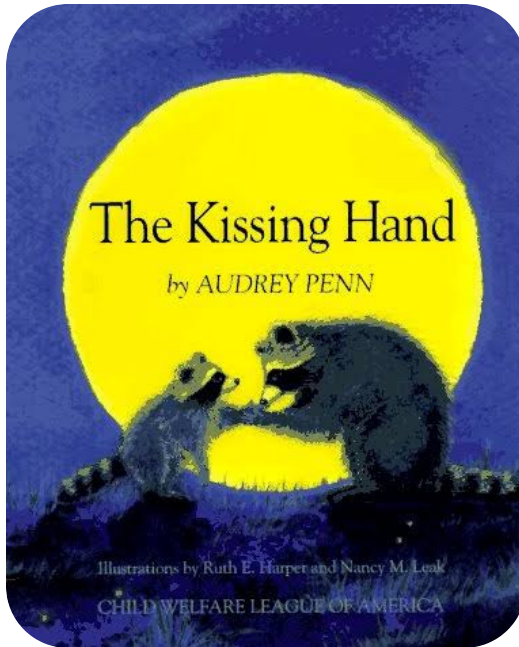
Did you know that children can strengthen the core skills they need for life? Executive function and self-regulation skills help us focus on what's important, plan ahead, set

goals, and follow through. No one is born with these skills fully developed, they can be built and strengthened over time.

Click on the video link below to explore the development and use of these skills and how supporting them pays off in school and life.

InBrief: Executive Function: Skills for Life and Learning

👁️ LOOKING AHEAD: SEPTEMBER



Get Ready for International Literacy Month in September

Start the month of September by visiting your local library and checking out the book ***The Kissing Hand*** for your child. Turn your story-time into talk time!

While reading *The Kissing Hand*, pause and ask open-ended questions that encourage your child to think, talk, predict, and make connections to their own experiences.

Here are a few open-ended questions to get you started!

- **Beginning:** "How do you think Chester feels about going to school?" "What do you think his mom might do to help him?"
- **Middle:** "Why do you think Chester's mom kisses his hand?" "How do you think the Kissing Hand makes Chester feel?" "What would make you feel better if you were nervous?"
- **End:** "How did Chester feel at the end of the story?" "What changed from the beginning?" "What was your favorite part and why?"
- **Make a connection:** "Have you ever felt like Chester?" "What helps you feel safe when we're apart?" "If you could give someone a Kissing Hand, who would you give it to?"

Reading a story is just the beginning; it's what you do with it that truly creates the magic!

Ask questions, introduce new words, and discuss how the characters feel. These simple conversations help your child build language and vocabulary, while also giving

them space to understand, express, and talk about their own feelings. Every story is a chance to connect, share, and, most importantly, learn together. 🌞

PROGRAMS AND RESOURCES 🛠️

Open the door to your child's success with **High Quality** Early Learning!



♥ School Readiness *Get them ready!*

School Readiness is an early learning program that helps working families and families attending school with childcare expenses while preparing children for school.

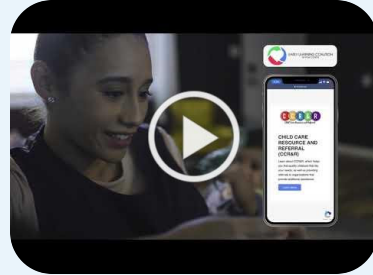
[Learn More](#)



♥ VPK Ready? *Let's Get YOU Enrolled!*

The application window is now open! Apply for VPK using the link below to obtain your 2026 - 2027 VPK certificate.

[Learn More](#)



♥ **Child Care Resource & Referral (CCR&R)** is a service focused on helping families find quality childcare that fits their individual needs as well as providing referrals to other organizations.

[Learn More](#)

MISSION

We will lead community efforts in supporting the success of children.

VISION

Children will be prepared for school and life success.

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