

The Heartbeat

EARLY LEARNING COALITION OF POLK COUNTY NEWSLETTER



A NOTE FROM THE HEART



April invited us to pause and recognize the unique ways children see the world around them.

During **Autism Awareness Month**, we celebrated neurodiversity—the strengths, perspectives, and potential within every child. In the early learning community, meaningful intervention starts with understanding, genuine connection, and creating environments where all children feel seen, supported, and valued.

Together, we remain committed to nurturing a community where every child has the opportunity to grow, learn, and shine in their own unique way. The **ELC of Polk** offers comprehensive support services—including technical assistance and training for families, early childhood providers, and community members—who work with children who may have unique or additional needs. To learn more about our **Warm Line** and available resources, visit elcpolk.org or call **863-733-9080**.

With gratitude and kindness,

The ELC of Polk Team



BULLETIN



EARLY LEARNING COALITION
OF POLK COUNTY



6TH ANNUAL FAMILY FUN DAY

BUILDING BLOCKS OF KINDNESS

*FREE
FOOD

*FREE
GIFTS

FUN
ACTIVITIES

*While supplies last



*Food sponsored by



FREE autism screenings
provided by



June 6, 2026
9:00 AM - 1:00 PM

📍 115 S. Missouri Avenue
Lakeland, FL 33815



ELCPolk.org

SCAN FOR
FACEBOOK
EVENT



HIGHLIGHTS & IMPACTS



World of Reading Festival 2026!



Literacy came to life at the **World of Reading Festival** hosted by the **Junior League of Greater Lakeland**, The **Early Learning Coalition of Polk County** provided Family "Literacy" Engagement backpacks to more than 200



families!



Click below to learn about the
Junior League of Greater Lakeland!

[Learn More](#)

Celebrating Week of the Young Child (WOYC)





We celebrated the **Week of the Young Child (WOYC)** with a burst of imagination and plenty of teamwork during “Working Together” Wednesday! After reading "**Boxitects**" by Kim Smith, we collaborated to build our very own robot. A big thank you to **Childz Play n Learn** and Miss Kim for such a fun and inspiring morning!

Click below to listen to the story Boxitects by Kim Smith!

[Read Aloud](#)



FAMILY NEWSROOM



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 receive a \$100 bonus to start saving for future education costs.
- Apply for VPK and 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.

[Learn More](#)

Florida VPK

MATHEMATICAL THINKING



VPK Ready?

How to identify and extend a simple AB repeating pattern for a 4 year old who will be entering into Kindergarten.

Let's Get YOU Enrolled!

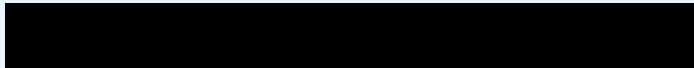
Apply for VPK using the link below to obtain your 2026 - 2027 VPK Certificate.

[Apply Today!](#)

Prepare a pattern during playtime using a muffin tin or an empty egg carton. Look for things that can fit inside each hole, like milk or marker caps. Make a pattern, like one red cap, then two blue caps and then



another red cap. Then give the caps to your child.



Spring Pattern Play!

V. Mathematical Thinking

C. Patterns

1. Identifies and extends a simple AB repeating pattern

Can you finish each pattern? Say it out loud or point to the answer!



_____ What comes next?



_____ What comes next?

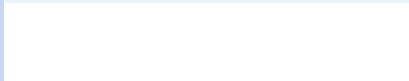


_____ What comes next?

Florida Early Learning & Developmental Standards

Click below to learn more about the Florida Early Learning and Developmental Standards for 4 Years Old to Kindergarten.

[Learn More](#)





clap



clap

clap _____ What

comes next?



_____ What comes next?



Family Challenge: Can you create your own pattern using books, flowers, or even movements like jump-clap-jump?



Try This at Home:

- Make a pattern with storybooks and toys
- Create a “reading pattern” (read-clap-read-clap)
- Go outside and find patterns in nature!



ARTICLES & TIPS



BIG SAVINGS FOR BRIGHT FUTURES!

Governor Desantis announces more than 13,000 families benefit from new VPK & Florida Prepaid College savings plans partnership.

[View Article](#)



6 Educational Toys for Infants and Toddlers

Hot toys come and go, but classics like the 6 listed here will never slip out of fashion. We scouted the shelves for the best of the best to create this timeless list of must-have developmental toys for curious babies and educational toys for toddlers.

[View Article](#)



KINDNESS IN ACTION



#BeKind!Polk

This month the April Team planted seeds of kindness with a simple poem.

Giving Seeds of Kindness

Plant these seeds and watch them grow, Just like kindness when you show, a smile, a word, a helping hand, can bloom far more than you have planned.

Scatter kindness every day, and see the love spread far away.

Thank you to our April Kindness Team for helping kindness bloom across Polk County!



LOOKING AHEAD: MAY



Join us at the Watermelon Festival for hands-on activities on Bonnet Springs Park's Great Lawn until 2 pm!



Teacher Appreciation Week

2026!

Monday, May 4th to Friday May 8th

May is a time to recognize and celebrate the educators who nurture curiosity, inspire growth, and make a lasting impact on our children every single day. Take a moment to show your appreciation for your child's teacher and the care, dedication, and heart

they bring to helping your child learn and thrive.



Happy Mother's Day!

Looking ahead, we celebrate Mother's Day this May, a special time to honor and appreciate all **mothers** and **caregivers** who play such an important role in children's lives.



PROGRAMS AND RESOURCES



ELC of Polk Family Training Opportunities!

ELC of Polk offers **family** training opportunities designed to build knowledge of child development in engaging and meaningful ways, through interactive, hands-on classes, families gain practical strategies to support their child's learning and growth at home. These fun and informative sessions empower families to feel confident, connected, and inspired!

Click below for more information on Family Trainings!

[Learn More](#)

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.



WANT MORE ELC NEWS?



[VISIT THE ELC NEWSROOM](#)