

The Heartbeat

EARLY LEARNING COALITION OF POLK COUNTY NEWSLETTER

8TH ANNUAL GALA THEME SHINES SPOTLIGHT ON KINDNESS





This year's gala, sponsored by **Highlights**, centered around a meaningful theme. **CEO Marc Hutek, Ed.D.**, felt "**Growing a Garden of Kindness**" would encourage all organizations to focus on the importance of instilling kindness in children by modeling kind behavior through our own actions. Earlier in the year, the Coalition partnered with Highlights by purchasing Kindness Connections kits for early childhood educators. The lessons were designed to familiarize children with topics such as Understanding Emotions, Empathy and Compassion, Gratitude and Appreciation, and Communication and Listening, among others, to build critical life skills and, in the long term, shape a kinder future.

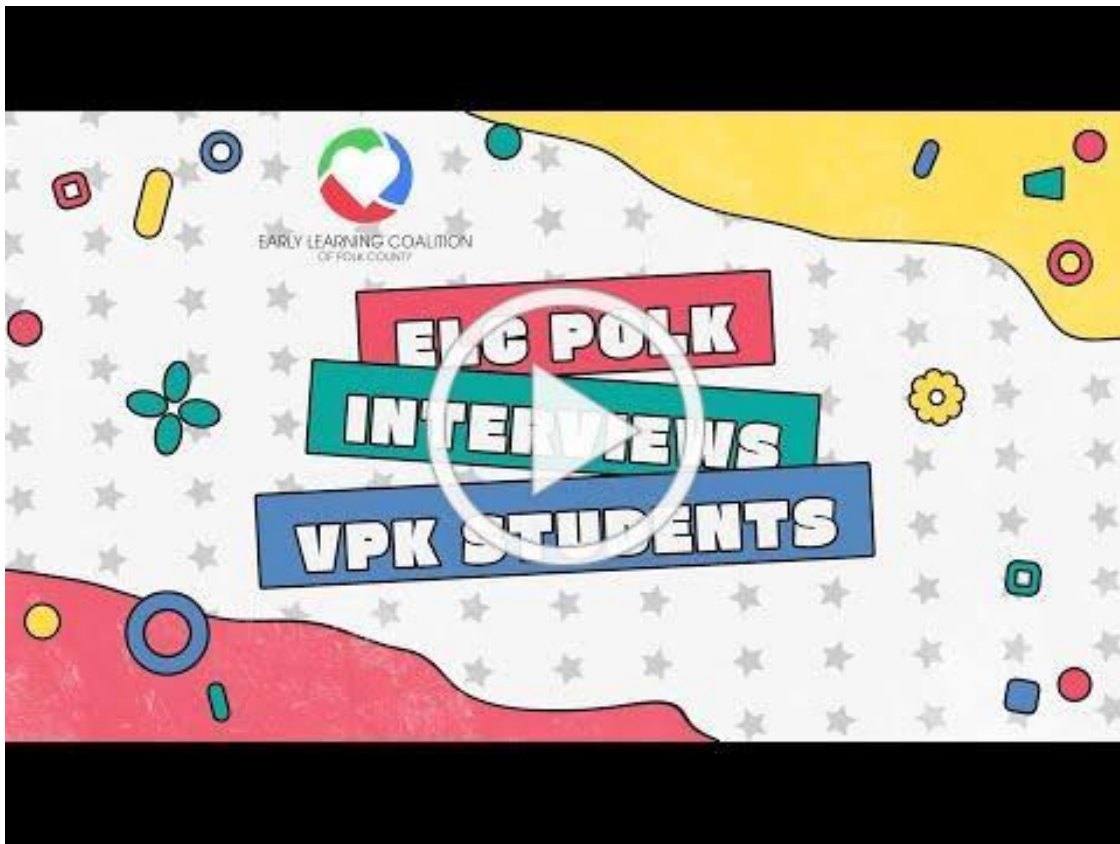
Each kit includes a collection of educator guides and a Family newsletter filled with activities for families to enjoy at home! Through these activity cards, early childhood educators, children, and families can engage in interactive experiences that help children notice others' feelings, express kindness in meaningful ways,

nurture emotional growth, and shine their brightest at school, at home, and in the community!

As the 8th Annual Gala comes to a close, we shine a lasting spotlight on kindness, carrying its light into our community as a reminder that kindness is always worth celebrating.

“There are three ways to ultimate success: The first way is to be kind. The second way is to be kind.

The third way is to be kind.” – Fred Rogers



Click the video above to view a video that was shown at the Gala highlighting our VPK students' colorful imagination as they answer questions about their favorite things and what kindness means to them.

**FOUNDATIONS OF LOVE ACADEMY CELEBRATES WORLD KINDNESS DAY WITH
READING “*Kindness is My Superpower*”**

by Alicia Ortego



Kindness may be small, but its SUPERPOWER is mighty! Thank you to **Foundations of Love Academy** in Bartow for celebrating World Kindness Day with us! **Mental Health Director Sheila Chambers** did a fantastic job reading "*Kindness is My Superpower*" by Alicia Ortego!!!

During the storytelling, the children were full of curiosity, pointing to the pictures and sharing their own stories of kindness. After reading the story, the children dove deeper into a creative activity in which they discuss the colors of flower petals and which emotions each color represents. They then used these colors to create their own 'kindness flowers'.



"*Kindness is My Superpower*" tells the story of Luca, who learns that being kind, saying sorry, helping others, and showing care can make a big difference. With his mom's guidance, he discovers that kindness is a superpower everyone can use to make the world a brighter place.

On World Kindness Day, we're reminded to use this "superpower" to spread compassion, encourage others, and make our homes and communities better places for everyone!



Click above for a read aloud of ***Kindness is My Superpower!***

FAMILY ENGAGEMENT TIP: SERVE & RETURN INTERACTION SHAPES BRAIN CIRCUITRY



Family engagement grows stronger when families understand the importance of simple, meaningful interactions with their young children. One of the most powerful ways to connect is through serve and return, a responsive interaction model from the Center on the Developing Child at Harvard.

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POSITIVE PARENTING TIP: HOW TO USE VISUAL SCHEDULES TO HELP YOUR CHILD UNDERSTAND EXPECTATIONS



After reading this article, you will understand how visual schedules in the household provide young children with a simple, picture-based guide that helps them know what comes next in their day. These schedules reduce stress and power struggles by making routines predictable and easier to follow. When children can see their responsibilities, such as brushing their teeth, cleaning up, or getting ready for bed, they gain confidence and independence.

Visual schedules also support language development and assist children who struggle with transitions or verbal directions. Families benefit as well because expectations become clearer and routines run more smoothly. Overall, visual schedules create a calm, structured home and educational environment where children feel secure, capable, and ready to learn. For more info click here:

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Here is a link for families to create their own visual schedule!

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SCHOOL READINESS TIP: WHAT IS IMAGINATIVE PLAY AND WHY IS IT IMPORTANT FOR YOUNG CHILDREN?



Imaginative play can be integrated into your home by providing simple everyday items, such as common things around the house which inspire pretend scenarios. When children engage in pretend play, they practice problem-solving, language, and social skills in an enjoyable way. Families can foster this by joining

in the play, asking questions, and allowing children to take the lead in the story. These experiences matter because imagination and gratitude grow together, helping children appreciate what they have, express kindness, and fosters creativity with confidence!

For more info click here:

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KINDNESS CONNECTIONS: 6 TYPES OF BOOKS YOUR BABY NEEDS NOW (SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT)



Reading a variety of books with young children helps build strong language, imagination and early literacy skills. Nurse rhymes and sound poetry boost memory and sound awareness through rhythm and repetition, concept books, board books, and wordless books introduce basic ideas and spark creativity. Read more by pressing the link below to support your child's brain development, curiosity, and a lifelong love of reading!

For more info, click here:

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