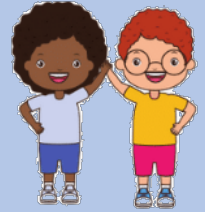


Early Learning Parents' Pages



THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE DIVISION OF EARLY LEARNING

What are Florida's Early Learning and Developmental Standards?

A child's development of learning and social skills begins at home and from birth. As a parent or caregiver, you are your child's first teacher. The [Florida Early Learning and Developmental Standards](#) helps support your child's learning and development from birth to age 5 with clear guidance on ways you can provide productive early learning experiences.

The Early Learning and Development Standards describe the concepts and skills children develop and learn as they grow and prepare for kindergarten. The purpose of the standards is to support the development and well-being of young children and to foster their learning.

These standards are grouped around eight domains of early learning and development:



These domains, or areas of development, are a useful way to look at the developmental progression of related skills and abilities. Each domain is further divided into components, sub-components (where applicable), standards and, where appropriate, benchmarks. Components are the organizing concepts of each domain and represent the major topics to be addressed during each age range. Standards are expectations of what children should know and be able to do by the end of each age range. Benchmarks are more precise than standards and are set to reflect the level of skill and knowledge that most children are able to demonstrate at the end of each age range.

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Standards and benchmarks assist teachers in planning instruction and discussing expectations and growth with families. It is important to remember that all children develop differently and at different times and that children can demonstrate their knowledge and capabilities in many ways. Standards are not a checklist of items a child must be able to do at each age and stage of development but are a guide to opportunities for exploring and discovering throughout the first five years. Significant delays or interruptions in the sequence of development are signals for further assessment and evaluation. Children with special needs will reflect the achievement of these standards in ways that are unique to their strengths and challenges.

The Division of Early Learning encourages families to use the Florida Early Learning and Developmental Standards to support and enrich the development of their children. Young children learn from daily routines and planned and unplanned activities. They also learn from adults and other children. This learning is enhanced when adults actively guide and expand young children's play through exploration, encouragement, imitation and repetition. By providing an environment of purposeful early experiences, families are preparing their children for later success in school and in life.



Teacher Appreciation!

Teacher Appreciation Week is May 2 – 6. The Division of Early Learning is saying “thank you” to the extraordinary early learning educators who provide care for Florida’s young learners. Celebrating this special week with your child is a way to recognize their teacher(s) and to make sure every educator knows how much you appreciate them. Celebrate the early learning educators in your child’s life by creating a High Five Card with your child.

Instructions for creating a fun High Five Card:

Help your child choose any color of washable paint, paper, paintbrush, crayons or markers, and paper towels.

- Assist your child with pouring paint on a sheet of paper.
- Brush the paint on the paper with the paintbrush.
- Assist your child with placing their hand in the paint. Make sure each finger has paint on them.
- Stamp your child’s painted hand on the paper and let the paper dry.
- Make sure your child washes their hands.
- Decorate the paper once it dries and fold it into a card.
- Talk to your child and ask, “What did you write on the card?” and “Who is this card for?”



CREATIVE EXPRESSION THROUGH THE ARTS

The Early Learning Developmental Standards provide standards-based activities you can complete with your child to support their understanding of art appreciation. The sample teacher appreciation card shared above relates to Creative Expression Through the Arts, that you can do with your 3- to 4-year-old. When your child participates with you during the activity, they can express opinions and feelings about their own art form as well as a variety of artistic expressions of others. Creative Expression Through the Arts provides children with opportunities to express ideas and feelings, use words, manipulate tools and media, and solve problems. Through art, a child can learn to express what they know and pursue their own interests and abilities to appreciate the contributions of others. You can access more activities based on your child’s age at the [Florida’s Early Learning and Developmental Standards](#) webpage.

Invest By 5 - Why Early Learning Matters

By Erica Turchin

Manager, Marketing & Resource Development – Early Learning Coalition of Hillsborough County

We send our children to kindergarten with no questions asked. We have hopes and dreams for our children and trust their teachers to help shape their little growing minds with the hope that our baby will walk down the aisle to get their diploma at 18. We invest so much in our children from kindergarten through 12th grade and encourage those extracurricular activities, but what about all those years before they turn 5?

Surprisingly, the most important years of your child's life starts at birth till they reach age five. Ninety percent of a child's brain is fully developed in this short amount of time.

Why is early learning so important? Early learning sets the foundation for a child to have a successful future. It's like building a new home with a strong foundation. It will stand strong over the years and include fond memories. A home built on a poor foundation can be fixed but it takes more time, money and extra assistance to correct. Getting involved in your child's early learning experiences also helps in the way your child copes with different life experiences and builds relationships with the people around them.

Supporting early learning isn't as complicated as it may seem. You are probably doing much of it without even knowing it. Literacy is important and can be shared when bonding over bedtime stories. Those tiny ears and eyes are never too young to hear and see robust words, or the words from the magazine article you may be reading. Early learning activities don't have to be costly. They can be as simple as visiting the local library for story time. Taking your child to the park to walk the nature trail is not only relaxing and a breath of fresh air but it's also a great way to discover the sights, sounds and textures outside. Bringing children to a community event is another great way to practice early learning, as it can become a cultural experience where they can learn about and see new people. Your child is never too young to experience life and the positive experiences shared during family activities.

As parents and caregivers, sometimes we don't always feel like we are doing our best at being creative in teaching our child. This is when it's a great idea to reach out to a child care center, with age-appropriate curriculum, to foster early learning. Enrolling children in child care gives them the opportunity to build relationships and trust in a caregiver other than a family member, learn with children of similar ages and discover the world through play. Centers are staffed with trained teachers and directors to ensure your child is receiving the best education for their growing mind.

Start your child off with a strong foundation! Early learning coalitions are an extended support to you and your child, from the moment they are born, as you prepare them for kindergarten.

Congratulations 2022 VPK Graduates

The Division of Early Learning congratulates all 2022 VPK graduates! Your child is now ready and on their way to kindergarten. You can find resources to support your child's learning during the summer on the DEL [Summer Learning](#) page and as they transition to kindergarten on the [DEL Florida Transition to Kindergarten](#) page.

How do you plan to celebrate your new VPK graduate? Share a photo or story on the DEL [Facebook](#) or [Instagram](#) using #VPKGraduation2022.

Use this Graduation Certificate [template](#) to celebrate this big milestone.





Summer fun is right around the corner! When temperatures get warmer your child will want to play and splash in the water outside. Water safety is an important skill at any age to assist a child's behavior in and around the water. Bathroom water safety is important too. Never allow your child to go near or in the water alone and always have a water watcher with your child to observe them closely, no matter their swimming level.

Before you head out to the pool, beach or any body of water, talk to your child about staying safe while having fun.

Tips for keeping your child safe in and around water:

- Register your child for swimming lessons. The [American Red Cross](#) can help you locate a swimming class near you.
- Ensure your child is wearing properly fitting safety devices, such as a U.S. Coast Guard approved lifejacket when on a boat, raft or inner tube.
- Call 911 during emergencies.
- Use toilet locks to prevent the drowning of toddlers.
- Never leave young children unsupervised in the bathroom or the bathtub.



Teaching children water safety is a key part of reducing child drownings. [The Ounce of Prevention Fund of Florida](#) reminds us that children can drown in less than two inches of water. Typically, drownings happen when the supervising adult is distracted. Adult supervision is the most effective prevention strategy. Limit distractions around water by staying off your phone and actively watching your child. If you have a pool, spa or other body of water nearby, ensure you have barriers in place. It is also important for parents and caregivers to be prepared:

- Learn [CPR](#).
- Make a [first-aid kit](#) and keep emergency instructions inside.
- Keep emergency numbers nearby in case you need them:
 1. Poison Control number (1-800-222-1222).
 2. Your child's doctor or pediatrician.
 3. The child's parents' work numbers and other contact information, if child is left with another caregiver.

 **SCIENTIFIC INQUIRY**

The Florida Early Learning and Developmental Standards provide activities you can do with your child to support their understanding of water, such as an Earth Space Science activity you can do with your 8- to 18-month-old. During bath time, your infant or toddler can explore water using plastic cups or containers in the bathtub.

Scientific Inquiry addresses a child's exploration of the world around them. Children are natural investigators and their level of understanding deepens over time with varied experiences. Exploration and discovery are ways that young children learn about their world by first using their senses and reflexes. You can find more activities based on your child's age at [Florida Early Learning and Developmental Standards](#).



What's the Harm Leaving Your Child in the Car?

In Florida, we hear it all too often, never leave your child in the car when it's hot outside, even when the window is cracked open, or the cold air is turned on. A child should never be left in the car because it can lead to dehydration, heat stroke or worse. Heat stroke or hyperthermia is the biggest danger for a child who may have been left inside a car. Heat stroke can damage a child's brain and affect other bodily organs. Unfortunately, it can even lead to death.

It does not take long for a child's body temperature to become too high too quickly when left in a car. The temperature inside a car can rise 20 degrees in just 10 minutes and 40 degrees within an hour. Even if it does not feel hot outside, it can still be dangerous inside a car. Leaving the windows open slightly does not prevent the temperature from rising to a dangerous level. A child's body has not yet developed the ability to cool down as quickly as an adult. With a child's body heat rising three to five times faster than an adult's, tragedy can occur even when it's just 70 degrees Fahrenheit outside.

Not only is it dangerous to leave a child in your car unsupervised, but it can also be *illegal*. What can you do to protect your child from these dangers? You might think you would never forget your child in the back seat, but it can happen to anyone. Busy schedules, lack of sleep and changes in routine can distract us easier than you might think.

- Place your cell phone, gym bag, briefcase or other personal item in the backseat of your vehicle, near your child. This can help you see your child when you open the door to get the item.
- Set your smart phone or electronic calendar to send you a reminder to drop your child off at daycare.
- Ask your daycare provider to call you when your child is late or absent from their child care center.
- Keep a large stuffed animal in the car seat when your child is not with you. When your child is in the car, move it to the front seat where you will notice. This can act as a reminder that your child is with you.

Want to learn more about how to keep your child safe? Visit the Department of Children and Families' Office of Child Welfare website at <https://bit.ly/dcfsummersafetytips>.

Is your family ready?

June 1 marks the start of hurricane season. Understanding the essentials of how to prepare your family can make a difference. The State of Florida and the Division of Emergency Management offer a wide variety of resources for your family, including hurricane kits, how to secure your home, knowing how to make a family plan and what to do during power outages. Always plan ahead and know how to proceed safely during the aftermath. For more information, visit <https://bit.ly/preparing2022hurricanesseason>.



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