

Early Learning Parents' Pages

March 2018

- Family-Friendly Places to Learn: Libraries and Museums
- It's National Nutrition and Read-Aloud Months
- Read to Babies
- Earned Income Tax Credit



Let's Go on a Learning Outing!

You may think of libraries and museums as places where you have to be very quiet and children are not welcome.

But, today's libraries and museums are family-friendly and eager to have your family visit. Many libraries and museums across Florida are reaching out, inviting families to visit and discover all the ways they can help support their children's learning and development.

"Libraries and museums are trusted, welcoming places where children make discoveries, deepen common interests, expand words and knowledge, and connect their natural curiosity to the wider world. Neuroscientists tell us the learning that occurs in these institutions—self-directed, experiential, content-rich—promotes executive function skills that can shape a child's success in school and life. The experiences, resources and interactions provided by libraries and museums build brains and fuel a love of learning." ([Growing Young Minds: How Museums and Libraries Create Lifelong Learners](#), Institute of Museum and Library Services, June 2013)



Take your child to visit the library and find out what it has to offer. The programs and resources available to families may surprise you. Your child will enjoy the children's book area where he can check out books and take them home. That area usually has places your child can play, listen to stories and learn to

use a computer. Most libraries have special programs for children and their parents or grandparents, including story time, classes on how to use library resources, computers, free internet access, digital media classes, literacy classes, Grandparents as Parents' meetings, parenting classes, English language classes, GED classes and more to support families in the community. The library is a great place to meet other families and enjoy talking with other parents.

Knowledge is free at the library. Just bring your own container.

Many museums are designed specifically for children and families or have a special family area. There are places your child can explore and be amazed and fascinated by the things he sees, hears and experiences. Some Florida museums have *Children's Days* or *Family Days* on a regular basis with programs that have opportunities for families and young children to interact with museum staff and have access to many hands-on activities. All children's museums have interactive, child-oriented displays and artifacts your child will enjoy. Going to a museum gives you an opportunity to have your child [practice good manners and safety rules in public](#).

Take your child on a learning adventure. Visit your local library and museums!



In This Issue

Head to a library or museum for a family-friendly outing

Celebrate Read-Aloud Month

Are you saving money with EITC?

Reading to babies

How to make healthy eating happen for your children

April calendar

OFFICE OF
Early Learning

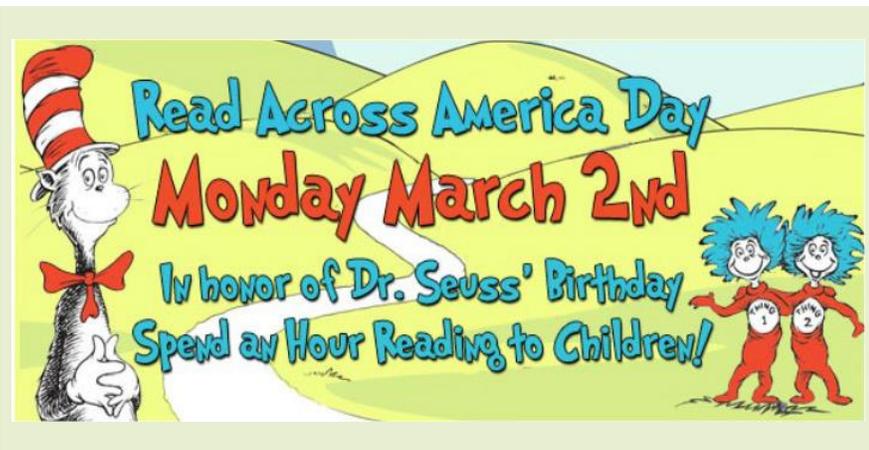
LEARN EARLY. LEARN FOR LIFE.

Early Learning Parents' Pages

Read Aloud in March

March is National Read Aloud Month. Reading aloud to your child every day is the best way to increase your child's vocabulary and reading skills. The month begins with Read Across America Day on Friday, Mar. 2, 2018, which also happens to be Dr. Seuss' birthday. You may want to read your child's favorite Dr. Seuss book to her that day. For other activities, recipes and printables to celebrate Read Across America Day, visit [Seussville](#).

Reading aloud to your child is the best way to help develop her early reading skills. When you read to her, you become a reading role model and help her associate reading with pleasure. She is [learning all about books](#) as you turn the pages, point out the pictures and talk about what is happening. You can "read the pictures" (talk about them) in a book if you think the story is too long to hold her interest. Asking her questions about the pictures or talking about the characters supports beginning comprehension skills. Help your child learn to make connections between what she reads and her own experiences by making connections as you read. Stop and say, "The grandma in the story is a lot like your grandma," or "The dog in the story looks like our dog."



Pause at different parts of a story and ask questions such as "What do you think will happen next?" or "Why do you think the boy looks sad?"

During National Read Aloud Month, make a commitment to read aloud to your child daily for at least 15 minutes. Take her to the local public library and get her a library card. Help her select books to take home for you to read to her. Find a special place at home to keep books, a bookshelf or a plastic container, to keep the books from getting damaged or lost.

Read to your child wherever you go. Read signs as you ride in the car or on a bus, menus at restaurants, grocery or shopping lists, and labels on food or clothing when you go shopping. This shows her that she can read to get important and useful information.

For tips on reading aloud to babies, toddlers and preschoolers, and to [find age-appropriate booklists](#), visit [Read Aloud 15 Minutes](#).



SAVE FOR A RAINY DAY?

What is Earned Income Tax Credit?

Earned Income Tax Credit or EITC, also called EIC, is an important benefit providing a financial boost to working individuals and families with children. To claim EITC, you need to meet certain qualifications and file a return even if you have no other filing requirement or owe no tax. **Find more information about EITC at www.irs.gov/eitc.**

Early Learning Parents' Pages

Reading to Babies

One of the most frequently asked questions of teachers and child care providers is "What can I do to help my child learn to read?"

Research has made it clear that reading to your child daily is the most important thing you can do to prepare your child to learn to read. If you are the parent of a newborn, you may think it is too soon to read to him, but [reading to your newborn](#) is a great way to expose him to sounds, words and feelings.

Babies' brains are growing rapidly, making trillions of connections during the first 3 years of life. At birth your baby's brain contained about 100 billion neurons and by age 3, his brain will have made nearly 1,000 trillion neural connections.

The [more you read to your child](#), the more connections will develop in his brain. He is learning language at an amazing rate in those first years, the number of words he knows will quadruple between the ages 1-2. The more [you talk and read](#) to your baby during these years, the more words he will learn.



Experts on reading development and child development urge parents to read to their [children starting at birth](#).

"We strongly believe if parents understood how important their role is as first teacher, and the difference that reading aloud for 15 minutes every day from birth can make, they would absolutely do it," says Co-Founder and Executive Director of [Read Aloud 15 Minutes](#) Bob Robbins.

"When parents understand that talking, playing, singing and reading aloud are not enhancements, but are instead requirements for their child's development, we will see huge leaps in children's readiness for school and life."

Jim Trelease, author of the [Read-Aloud Handbook](#), writes, "Every time we read to a child, we're sending a 'pleasure' message to the child's brain. You could even call it a commercial, conditioning the child to associate books and print with pleasure."

Holding your baby and reading to him helps him bond with you and sends him a message that reading is a pleasurable experience. Time spent reading to your child is time spent investing in his future. He will learn to read better, think better and have a better imagination. The immediate rewards are for you, the enjoyment of spending quality time with your baby and sharing the enjoyment of reading a book together.



[Reading Tips for the Parents of Babies](#) (available in multiple languages)

[Book selections for babies, toddlers and preschoolers](#)

Early Learning Parents' Pages

How to Make Healthy Eating a Priority

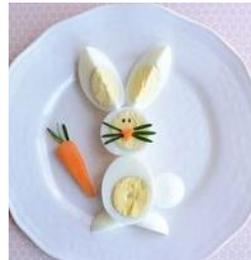
Good health begins with eating healthy foods. It is important to start your child eating healthy right from the start. As a baby, your child cried when she was hungry and you responded by feeding and probably comforting at the same time. Soon, she associated nursing or drinking from her bottle with comfort and togetherness. A positive connection, it should remain a positive social interaction as she gets older.

As your child grows, it is important for her to learn that healthy food is comfort food and helps her body grow. You are responsible for what your child eats, when she eats and where she eats. Offering healthy food choices as soon as she is able to eat solid foods is important. She may not like the foods at first, but keep giving her chances to try the foods on different days or prepared in different ways.

Toddlers may need to try a new food as many as 15 times before they begin to enjoy it. Give her two or three different healthy options at each meal and for snacks. Do not force her to eat food she doesn't want. If she is hungry, she will eat something. Toddlers and preschoolers may not eat a lot at every meal; but, over the day, they will usually eat enough to stay healthy. Keep encouraging her to eat at meals but do not let mealtime become a battle between you and your child.



You can try different ways to make healthy foods more appealing to your child. Use food coloring to make macaroni and cheese her favorite color. Use cookie cutters to cut sandwiches into shapes. Offer many different fruits and make fruit faces or fruit animals for snacks. You can give her pieces of fruit and let her make a face or an animal with them. For lunch, you can cut a boiled egg, cheese or sandwiches into shapes and make animals.



March is National Nutrition Month and a good time to learn more about eating healthy as a family.

More resources on healthy eating for children:

[Starting early – Healthy-eating habits from-0-to-3](#)

[Win over picky eaters](#)

[Supermarket Explorer](#)

[Healthy Reading for Toddlers](#)



April Calendar of Events

Celebrate Poetry Month ♦ Week of the Young Child (Apr. 16 – 20)
♦ Apr. 1 April Fools Day & Reading Is Funny Day ♦ Apr. 2 Peanut Butter and Jelly Day & Ferret Day ♦ Apr. 3 Find a Rainbow Day & Chocolate Mousse Day ♦ Apr. 4 Carrot Day & Vitamin C Day ♦ Apr. 8 Zoo Lovers' Day & Draw-a-Picture-of-a-Bird Day ♦ Apr. 10 Sibling Day ♦ Apr. 11 Pet Day ♦ Apr. 13 Thomas Jefferson's Birthday ♦ Apr. 15, Income Tax Day ♦ Apr. 18 Banana Day & Piñata Day ♦ Apr. 21 Kindergarten Day ♦ Apr. 28 Safe Kids Day & Save the Frogs Day & Blueberry Pie Day ♦ Apr. 29 Pinhole Photography Day ♦ Apr. 30 Oatmeal Cookie Day



Rodney J. MacKinnon
Executive Director



OFFICE OF
Early Learning
LEARN EARLY. LEARN FOR LIFE.

250 Marriott Drive
Tallahassee, FL 32399
Toll-free 866-357-3239
www.FloridaEarlyLearning.com