

SEPTEMBER 2020 – VOLUME 6, ISSUE 9

Early Learning Parents' Pages

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE OFFICE OF EARLY LEARNING

First Day of VPK!

Starting the Voluntary Kindergarten Program (VPK) is an important milestone in your child's life. You can celebrate the first day of VPK with them by taking their picture with the **My First Day of Florida VPK** flyer. It is available on the [Office of Early Learning's website](#). There is also a Facebook photo frame to use if you want to post the picture on Facebook.



Then, use **#1stDayVPK** when posting your photos on social media. The Office of Early Learning (OEL) will be sharing #1stDayVPK tagged pictures on our social media through the beginning of September this 2020–2021 school year. Follow along using #1stDayVPK on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#).

OEL has tips for the first day of VPK that will make your child's day go smoothly:

- Arrive early and allow enough time for your child to become familiar with their classroom and teacher before you say goodbye.
- Plan the night before and visualize the day. Help your child know what to expect and let them imagine how their first day will go.
- Discuss what they will wear on the first day and help them pick out their favorite outfit.
- Don't try and sneak away to prevent a meltdown. Accept that saying goodbye will be emotional, but remind your child that they'll be safe and will have fun at their new school. When they run off to play with friends, make sure to let them know that you are leaving and will return to get them.
- Practice getting ready in the morning, packing lunch and even driving to the school before the first day to help your child get familiar with this new routine.
- Let your child know how proud you are of them even before they take their first step into the classroom.



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2020-2021 VPK School Year Options

(Through December 31, 2020)

The Florida Department of Education (DOE) and the Office of Early Learning are approving flexible options for early learning providers to support parents rejoining the workforce and mirror the choices parents have for K-12 students. Eligible providers can choose to apply to offer a flexible innovative learning model or a hybrid model.

If providers in your area are approved to offer flexible options, these options would be available through December 31, 2020. Beginning in January 2021, students will return to face-to-face instruction. As a parent, you will continue to have the option to move your child to another VPK program or provider at any time.

Early learning providers must meet the following requirements to be eligible to provide flexible innovative options:

- Be open, offering in-person VPK. (Public school programs will be given special considerations in the South Florida counties in Phase I of reopening and Monroe County.)
- Ensure that up to 270 hours of instruction (through December 31, 2020) will be provided by qualified staff, using developmentally appropriate instruction aligned with the VPK standards, reporting students' progress and providing training to staff, students and parents.

For programs and availability, contact your local early learning coalition through the following link:

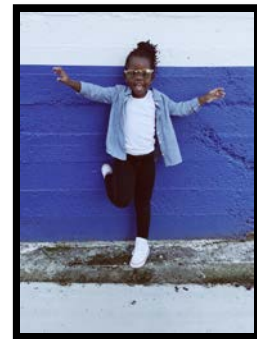
<http://www.floridaearlylearning.com/coalitions>

VPK Specialized Instructional Support (SIS)

VPK SIS is an option for children with disabilities who have a current Individualized Education Plan (IEP) where certified or licensed professionals provide instruction or therapy in individual or small group settings outside of a traditional classroom setting. For more information, please visit <http://www.floridaearlylearning.com/vpk/vpk-providers/specialized-instructional-services-providers>

Family Resources: Florida Early Learning Standards

Visit <http://flbt5.floridaearlylearning.com/families.html> to learn about the knowledge and skills that a child should know and be able to do at the end of each age-related timeframe. Resources and activities are also available for families to support children's learning and development.



Playing with Math

Many parents are not comfortable teaching their children math skills. You may be a parent who thinks that you don't know how or what to teach your child about math at home. [The Florida Early Learning and Developmental Standards](#) are available on the Office of Early Learning's website to help you. You will find activities and examples of ways to support your child's math skills on the [Families page](#) in the standards materials. There are videos, apps, Vroom tips and websites with math resources that you can use. [Math in the Bath](#) and [5 Ways to Build Math into Your Child's Day](#) are some activities for you and your child to "play with" that support math skills development.

In addition to the many resources included in the standards materials, you will find many activities that are based on play available on the Development and Research in Early Math Education (DREME) website. [Puzzle Play: An Easy Way to Boost Early Spatial and Math Learning](#) is one activity you can use to teach your child about [spatial concepts](#). There are also directions on how to make puzzles out of pictures, cereal boxes and paper.

The following suggestions help you focus on math skills your child will need to learn:

- **Point out features of puzzle pieces.** "That piece is short and curved. We need a long triangle."
- **Describe the blank spaces where puzzle pieces go.** "We're looking for two edge pieces here, one for the right side of the puzzle and one for the top of the puzzle. Both will have straight sides."
- **Ask questions about different puzzle pieces.** "How do you know that piece fits over there? Do you think this piece will fit—why or why not?"
- **Give clues and prompts to help children find the right piece.** "That piece is upside down. What happens if you flip it and turn it sideways?"
- **Use hands, as well as words, to explain.** "This is a corner piece." (Point to the corner). "It has two flat edges. This puzzle has four corners. Let me show you." (Point to each corner.)



You can turn reading time into math time. There are many picture books for young children that focus on math. Reading to your child and talking about the pictures makes math seem easy and fun. Cooking with your child or making quick snacks is another way to include math and it can be tasty too! You will find many math activities and ideas in the [At-Home Early Math Learning Kit for Families: Ideas for Supporting Young Children's Math Skills During Coronavirus and Beyond](#). The toolkit is available in English and [Spanish](#). It has suggestions for family card games and offers tips on finding math in your family's daily activities and routines.

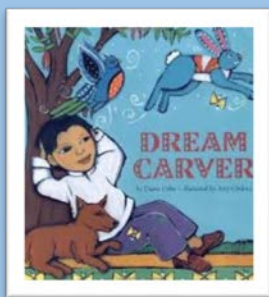
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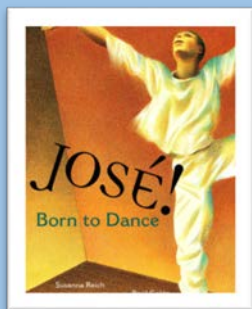
Beginning September 15th through October 15th people across the globe celebrate Hispanic Heritage Month.

[¡Colorin colorado!](#) celebrates Hispanic Heritage with dynamic booklists, classroom activities, and multimedia resources. Here are a few books from their list to celebrate!

Art and Artists



Dance



Music and Rhyme



DREME offers families [3 interactive storybook apps](#) for playful early math learning available free on Google Play or the App Store. [Vroom](#) offers math tips that use your family’s every day routines and activities to practice math skills specific to the age of your child. The Vroom tips are offered through a [free app](#), [text tips](#) or you can download the tips from the [Vroom website](#). The tips are also available through [Alexa](#).

[Kahn Academy Kids](#) offers families a fun educational program for children ages two to seven. You can download a free app with math and other learning activities to use at home with your child.



A National Platform for the Child and Adult Care Food Program

The National Child and Adult Care Food Program shares “Eggs Eight Ways”. How do you like your eggs? Share with us by visiting our [Facebook](#) or [Instagram](#) page and leave a comment using #EggTastic.

Eggs Eight Ways

Eggs are an excellent source of protein and a favorite CACFP meat alternate at mealtime. Serve them scrambled, hard boiled, over easy, baked, soft boiled, or in an omelet or egg salad. If you haven't tried poached eggs yet, try this classic!



- 1/2 English muffin, toasted
- 1 slice Canadian ham, warmed
- 1 slice tomato
- 1 poached egg
- 1 tablespoon sauce: (1 egg yolk, 1/4 cup Greek yogurt, 1 tbsp. lemon juice; mix and heat together while stirring on stovetop until thick)



Child Passenger Safety Week

September 20th - 26th is Child Passenger Safety Week, [KidsHealth](#) from Nemours shares important information on [Choosing Safe Baby Products: Infant Seats & Child Safety Seats](#) and [Car Seat Safety](#) for parents. In addition to making sure the child rides safely, always remember to check the backseat of the car before locking the doors. Adding this action to your daily routine helps keep children safe. Share a photo of your child with us as a safe passenger on [Facebook](#) or [Instagram](#) using #SafeinSeat.



Dads Encouraging their Children’s Learning

As a dad, you can have a [big impact on the life of your child](#) by showing that you value learning. The Florida Department of Education (FDOE) has designated Wednesday, September 30th, as [Dads Take Your Child to School Day](#). Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and social distancing, it will not be possible for dads to visit the school campuses. Instead, the FDOE is encouraging dads and male role models to look for different ways to support their child’s learning at home.

[Research confirms that dads play an important role](#) in the lives of their children. When dads or adult male figures take an active role early and often in the lives of their young children, it helps the child’s social and emotional development as well as their language, math and motor skills. The quality of the interactions between them is more important than the amount of time spent together. For example, responding to and comforting a baby has more of an impact on a child’s development than the time spent pushing the child in a stroller while talking on a cell phone.



This year, [Dads Take Your Child to School Day](#) will focus on the significance fathers and father figures can make by becoming more active in the educational experiences of children. All dads, stepfathers, grandfathers, uncles, brothers, foster fathers and other significant role models are encouraged to talk with their children on this special day about what they are learning at school, whether it’s virtual or at home.

The Office of Head Start offers [five ways that fathers can support their child’s learning every day](#):



- [Play](#) with your [child every day](#). It helps them learn [social skills](#).
- Follow your child’s interests and [encourage exploration and discovery](#).
- [Talk](#) with your child daily about what they are doing and learning.
- [Listen](#) to them when they talk about their feelings and ideas.
- Love your child as a [unique and special person](#).

Take the [pledge](#) to stay involved in your child’s education and enjoy your time together on Dads Take Your Child to School Day. Share on our [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#) using #Dads.

The Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC) has many [resources and promotion materials](#) to help stress the importance of washing hands with soap and water. Regular handwashing is one of the best ways to remove germs, avoid getting sick, and prevent the spread of germs to others. Be sure to share the resources with your family!



To find more information, in multiple languages, visit: <https://bit.ly/CDCMultipleLanguages>



Farmers Markets for the Family



With fall just around the corner and being stuck at home still a possibility, finding activities for your child outside the home can be tough. Events for you and your child to enjoy some fresh air, be able to socially distance and have a chance to learn can be a welcomed experience. Taking your child to a local Farmers Market is a great way to do all of this and so much more!

Helping your child be more involved in the shopping process can have many benefits. Farmers Markets have a more relaxed setting that allows your children to explore and nurture their curiosity. Children can learn where food comes from and in some cases meet the people who grow it. Your child will discover different [types of fruits](#) and [vegetables](#) and what [foods are found during different seasons](#). Giving your family new ideas for [making a meal at home](#) together, will also help create healthy eating habits that last a lifetime.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) offer resources that help your family know what to expect when [visiting a Farmers Market](#). You can support local businesses and famers, while you promote your child's healthy growth. If your family receives benefits from Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), you may be eligible to use benefits through the [WIC Farmers Market Nutrition Program](#) (FMNP) to buy from local markets. Families that use the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) can partner with local [SNAP-Ed programs](#) to use their benefits for shopping at markets, too.



To find a local market near you, visit the [USDA's Farmers Market Directory](#) and get shopping today!

National Grandparents Day

Families come in many different shapes and sizes. Some families have grandparents who are involved in their grandchild's life as a support or as a caregiver themselves. National Grandparents Day is the Sunday after Labor Day. This year it is on September 13. Grandparents will be honored and recognized for all they do for their grandchildren.

For many families, grandparents help fill a need by providing child care for their grandchildren. One in four children under the age of 5 are

cared for by a grandparent while the parent works or pursues education goals. These relationships can be rewarding. Grandparents can provide additional help to their families and the guidance they share is beneficial to both their children and grandchildren. To assist grandparents as care givers, ZERO TO THREE has developed [additional tools and best practices](#) to help support families with multigenerational involvement. This information is also [available in Spanish](#).



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To celebrate, help your child select one or more [activities](#) to show their love and appreciation on this day. Help them make a card by having them draw a picture. Help them write words to describe the picture that shows how much they



care. Start a scrap book or craft a homemade picture frame from popsicle sticks, seashells, or a kit from the local craft store. Remember to include safeguards, to protect grandparents that have underlying health conditions, when planning your activities. A simple thank you and acknowledgment of how much you appreciate them throughout the year goes a long way. Imagine the big smile on their faces as you share how their contributions supported your family. As any grandparent will tell you, spending quality time together is truly all they want. Share your thanks and love by posting on [Facebook](#) or [Instagram](#) with #GrandparentsDay.

Baby Safety Month

September is Baby Safety Month and Safe Kids Worldwide shares [5 Tips for New Parents](#).

1. Have your car seat installed and checked by a certified child passenger seat technician. You can find one near you [here](#).
2. Remember a firm mattress and a fitted sheet are all you need for your baby's crib. You can learn more about sleep safety [here](#).
3. Your baby's crib should be kept away from other furniture and windows. You can learn more about falls and choking prevention [here](#).
4. Setting your water heater to 120 degrees Fahrenheit can avoid scalds. You can learn about burn prevention [here](#).
5. Be sure your home has a working smoke alarm and carbon monoxide alarm. You can learn about fire prevention [here](#).



As your baby gets older and begins to crawl, walk and run around the house, accidents will happen. KidsHealth from Nemours has [Household Safety Checklists](#) to help you when making sure your home is safe for your child.

Safe to Sleep® Tip

Use a firm and flat sleep surface, such as a mattress in a safety-approved crib*, covered by a fitted sheet with no other bedding or soft items in the sleep area.

Learn more about safe infant sleep at <http://safetosleep.nichd.nih.gov>

* A crib, bassinet, portable crib, or play yard that follows the safety standards of the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) is recommended. For information on crib safety, contact the CPSC at 1-800-638-2772 or <http://www.cpsc.gov>.





You can visit our [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#) pages.

A great example of a good neighbor is Fred Rogers from [Mister Roger's Neighborhood](#). [The Fred Rogers Center](#) is the official archive of Fred Rogers and offers a mission for helping young children grow into caring people and a belief that whether we are parents, educators, or neighbors, each of us can impact a child's life with positive interactions.

September Special Dates:



6th Read a Book Day

7th Labor Day

11th 9/11 Remembrance Day

12th Chocolate Milkshake Day

17th Citizenship Day

25th Native American Day



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Commissioner of Education
Shan Goff
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