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Research shows that all children benefit from the time they spend in positive interactions and activities with a dad or other male role models. The relationship between a father and his child has a deep impact on all areas of the child’s healthy development: language, thinking, physical, and social-emotional. Children with dads who are actively involved in their education have fewer discipline problems and perform better academically. These children grow up to be more responsible adults.

The Florida Department of Education (FLDOE) encourages dads to participate in Dads Take Your Child to School Day on September 25, 2019. Dads can take children of all ages to school. Dads, take a moment to speak to your child’s teacher. Let your child see that you appreciate the people who work at their school. Your child is proud of you and will want to have teachers and other children see you at the school. In families without a dad present, other significant male role models are invited to participate. Although the event is focused on dads, mothers and other family members are invited to participate also.

Check their the school's websites and parent newsletters, or talk with your child’s teacher about special events planned for Dads Take Your Child to School Day.
Celebrating Grandparents

Take time to thank all grandparents for the important role they play in the lives of their grandchildren.

An increasing number of grandparents have had to step up and fill in as parents or care givers for their grandchildren. According to the 2010 Census, in Florida, there are 354,716 children living with grandparents (8.9 percent of the children in the state). If you are a grandparent or know a grandparent who provides child care for their grandchildren on a regular basis, you know how difficult this can be. Grandparents face many challenges and may need support, resources and services to better care for their grandchildren. A grandparent’s life often takes an unplanned detour when he or she becomes a parent to a grandchild.

Although many resources are available, there are barriers grandparents face that make it difficult for them to care for their grandchildren. There may be a lack of transportation. They may not speak English, or they may not know how or where to go for assistance and support.

It may have been many years since grandparents have taken care of a young child and there have been many changes in information on caring for children over the years. There are websites and apps that make it easy to learn about child development, milestones, and health and safety issues that may have changed. To learn more about what to expect an infant, toddler or young child to be able to do, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) have resources available in English and Spanish.

- The Milestone Tracker App tracks the milestones a child should reach in how he or she plays, learns, speaks, acts, and moves.
- If you are concerned about a child’s development, you can find resources and information on the CDC website as well.
- The Office of Early Learning has age-specific activities and information on our website that are aligned with the Florida Early Learning and Developmental Standards.
- Zero to Three has resources for grandparent who are caring for grandchildren.
- The Grandparent Guide: What’s New and What’s the Same? has information on what is new about caring for young children and what has stayed the same over the years.

To locate activities to use with grandchildren that will support their learning at home, there is a free app, Vroom, that grandparents can use. Vroom will send you daily activities specific to the age of the child.

Contact the early learning coalition in your area and ask for a Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) specialist. CCR&R staff will have a list of resources and information to assist grandparents or other family members who are caring for children.
Mental Health In Young Children

When you hear the terms **health** and **safety** for young children, you probably think about a child’s physical health and keeping them safe from danger or disease. There is another health issue that is just as important to your child’s health and safety – mental health. In young children, **mental health** is the same as healthy social and emotional development. Your child’s social development relates to their ability to manage their emotions and to make and maintain **healthy relationships** with others. Research shows that mental health begins **prenatally**, and there are many ways you can help your child have healthy social and emotional development starting at birth.

When your new infant cries or make sounds, respond to her by comforting or talking to her. Look into her eyes and talk softly or sing to her if she is upset. Gently rub her back, pick her up and walk around or rock her until she is calm. Find out what is causing the crying. Does she need to have her diaper changed? Is she hungry? Is she sick? Responding to your infant's cries and interacting with her when she is awake is **responsive parenting**.

Responding to your child and being sensitive to her needs is how you teach her to interact with others. This is the beginning of your infant learning how to form healthy relationships.

As your child grows, the relationship you build with her will help her form relationships with others. You will need to teach her about **different emotions she may feel** and how to express her emotions in a healthy, positive way. This will help her form **social skills** and determine how to treat others. Children first learn about emotions by watching their parents and family members. How you act when you are angry sets the stage for how she acts when she is angry. Your child will pay close attention to your facial expressions and tone of voice. You are a model for your child. If your child is scared about a new situation, she will watch your reactions first and then express how she feels about the situation.
When a baby becomes part of your family, it is time to make sure that your home is a safe place. Look around your home for things that could be dangerous to your baby. It also is important that you take the necessary steps to make sure you are mentally and emotionally ready for your new baby. Here are some tips to keep your baby safe:

- Do not shake your baby—ever! Babies have very weak neck muscles that are not yet able to support their heads. If you shake your baby, you can damage his brain or even cause his death.
- Make sure you always put your baby to sleep on his back to prevent sudden infant death syndrome (commonly known as SIDS).
- Protect your baby and family from secondhand smoke. Do not allow anyone to smoke in your home.
- Place your baby in a rear-facing car seat in the back seat while he is riding in a car as recommended by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.
- Prevent your baby from choking by cutting his food into small bites. Do not allow him to play with small toys or other items that are easy for him to swallow.
- Never allow your baby to play with anything that might cover his face.
- Do not have hot liquids or foods near your baby.
- Vaccinations (shots) are important to protect your child’s health and safety. Children can get serious diseases, so it is important that your child get the right shots at the right time. Talk with your child’s doctor to make sure that your child is up-to-date, on his shots.
Introducing Your Preschooler to New Cultures

September 15 - October 15 is National Hispanic Heritage Month. This is a perfect time to introduce your preschooler to new cultures. Teaching your child about other cultures makes him or her aware of the beautiful differences that make up his classroom, school and community. Take time this month to learn about the families of Hispanic Heritage in your community. Take your child to a Hispanic Festival and Teach your child about this culture by watching a short video. Many Hispanic families enjoy dance. You can turn on some music and dance with your child. Visit a local public library to find a book on Hispanic Heritage to enjoy reading with your child. When you share these experiences, you are teaching your child about diversity and acceptance of other cultures.

Your child may be interested in learning about their own family’s heritage. Call family members to ask them questions about your family’s heritage. Find out information or memories about previous generations that your living family members may remember. From what country did they come? What kinds of things were important to your family? Is there a family recipe that has been passed down from generation to generation? After you talk to family members, take your child to the local public library to learn more about your culture. A fun way to learn about your family’s heritage is to create a Family Tree. Make a favorite family recipe to enjoy with your child as you celebrate your family’s heritage.

When children are young, they only see what is right in front of them. Introducing them to new cultures gives them the opportunity to recognize and accept others for how they are the same and different from one another. You are your child’s first teacher and you set an example for your child in the way you treat and talk about people from other cultures. The more you and your child learn about the different cultures of the people in your community, the more accepting you will be of their differences. You will discover how much they are like your own family.

Books that celebrate Hispanic Heritage

https://www.readbrightly.com/picture-books-celebrate-hispanic-heritage/

A great way to celebrate Hispanic Heritage this month is by reading picture books with your child that honor Hispanic Heritage.

<--- Click the link for a list of books. Go to Youtube and search the title of the books to find read-aloud for you and your child to listen to and follow along. Here is a video of the book, Green is a Chile Pepper A Book of Colors by Roseanne Greenfield Thong, being read aloud.
Keep Young Children Safe

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As your baby grows and becomes mobile, you will need to rethink safety in your home. Your child is starting to crawl and walk and will want to explore every room in your home. Look through each room at your child’s eye level to spot safety hazards like uncovered outlets, cords, sharp objects, hot food or liquids, and medicines within your child’s reach.

Never leave your child alone in a bathtub or on a changing table, even if you are nearby. Use federally approved child safety seats in all vehicles in which your child rides. Leave an item such as a purse, briefcase or your cell phone in the back seat to make sure you never forget and leave your child in a hot vehicle.

For more information on child safety and preventable injuries, see the resources available from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Special Dates in October

- Sept. 15 - Oct. 15 is National Hispanic Heritage Month
- October is Down Syndrome Awareness Month
- Oct. 1 is National Homemade Cookies Day
- Oct. 5 is Do Something Nice Day
- Oct. 9 is Fire Prevention Day
- Oct. 21 is Count Your Buttons Day
- Oct. 26 is Make A Difference Day
- Oct. 31 is Carve A Pumpkin Day