

March 2022 – Vol. 8 Issue 3

# EARLY LEARNING PARENTS' PAGES

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE DIVISION OF EARLY LEARNING

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## Healthy Habits

Healthy habits start with healthy food choices and knowing the physical development of your child. The Division of Early Learning offers [Florida Early Learning's Developmental Standards and Professional Competencies](#) to help families understand a child's growth during the first five years. One of the key domains is physical development. Your child will experience changes in their body size, their muscle and bone strength, and physical coordination. They will also have more complex brain development during this time, all of which can be impacted by the food they consume. Making healthier food choices can positively affect this development.



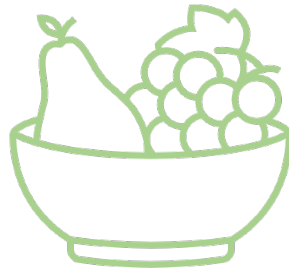
### I. Physical Development

Healthy eating starts with nutritious food choices. You can visit [Fresh From Florida](#), which provides information about Florida-grown food products, farmers' markets and crops that are in season. Families can also find [healthy recipes](#) that use food native to Florida.



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Further, the Child Care Food Program (CCFP) provides healthy food options to children in child care facilities. The CCFP can help your child’s learning center provide meals that are more nutritious and put in place the best options available for the children who are served. To learn more about the CCFP, visit the [Florida Department of Health’s website](#).



## Read Aloud Month

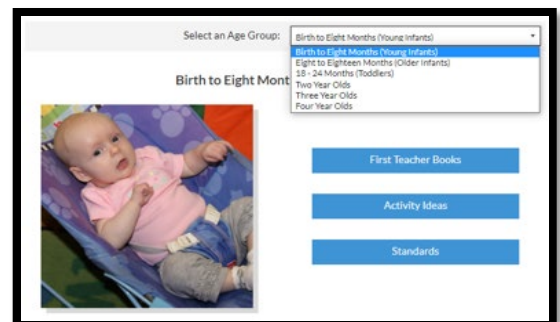
March is Read Aloud Month! Children’s learning and development starts at home as you are your child’s first teacher. Take time this month to read aloud at home or at a park with your child. Reading with your child looks different for all age groups but is equally important at all ages. For infants and toddlers, read for small amounts of time, multiple times a day. As you read, point, touch and name the pictures. For preschoolers, as you read, pause and ask questions to engage your child with the pictures. You can ask your preschooler to point or name a specific picture in the book.

Take a book and read outside with your child. “We’re Going on a Bear Hunt” by Helen Oxenbury is a book from the [Division of Early Learning’s Preschool Booklist](#) that you can read aloud with your child.



Here are some helpful tips on accessing the resources available to you to support your child’s learning and development at home.

1. Visit <http://flbt5.floridaearlylearning.com/families.html> for activities that align with the Florida Early Learning and Developmental Standards.
2. Select your child’s age group.
3. For your selected age group, you can:
  - View the First Teacher Book: A Parent’s Guide to growing and learning.
  - Scroll down to view and download the Vroom activity ideas for your selected age group.
  - Select the blue Standards button.



# Baby NAVIGATOR™

What every parent needs to know

Baby Navigator is an app developed through the Division of Early Learning's Preschool Development Grant by Florida State University's College of Medicine, Autism Institute. The app provides resources and tools for families to celebrate and support their baby's early learning.

When you join Baby Navigator, you can:

- **Learn** about your baby's social communication milestones and parenting strategies that support early development in fun, short video tutorials that you select from a menu by age or by question.
- **Explore** video clips showing how babies are learning new social communication milestones. With each milestone clip, watch a companion clip that tells you about the supports the parent is using. Explore the milestone and support clips to find out what your baby is learning, what is coming next, and how to support your baby's learning from month to month.
- **Chart** your baby's social communication milestones every two months starting at 3 months. Track your baby's growth through five domains of development to get ready for preschool. Celebrate these early critical milestones as you watch your baby grow.

How much does Baby Navigator cost?

- Baby Navigator is grant funded and a FREE resource. All resources are virtual so you can access them from anywhere, anytime.



What if something doesn't seem quite right?

- In Baby Navigator, you will have resources customized to your baby's results on the SoCo CheckUp. These are to help you learn how early signs of language delay and autism can impact your child's development, what you can do about it and how you can build your care team.



The mission of Baby Navigator is to provide resources and tools for families to celebrate and support their baby's early learning and nurture the development of language and success in school and in life.

[Click here](#) to register for Baby Navigator. Once you join Baby Navigator, you will receive weekly reminders and updates on resources in your account monthly. You can decide what you want to do and use and fill out as your baby grows. You can opt out anytime. Baby Navigator is also available in Spanish and Creole.

### Developmental Disabilities Awareness



It is important to provide individuals with developmental disabilities opportunities and encouragement needed to achieve at their fullest potential and live productive lives. To support awareness, your family can encourage others to use social media to educate and spark conversations about children with developmental disabilities.

Here are a few ways your family can support awareness of children with developmental disabilities:

- Wear yellow or blue.
- Start a discussion group to have open communication with the community and family members.
- Participate in an annual walk.
- Volunteer at local organizations.

Use the FLDOE Disability Awareness Resource Guide from the Florida Department of Education to learn more about Disability Awareness:

<https://www.fldoe.org/core/fileparse.php/7690/urlt/0070081-dha-resource2010.pdf>



March is a great time to start selecting summer camp options for your child. Many camps offer open registration in March and April. It is important to search for summer camps early to avoid not having a slot at your selected camp. The camps fill up quickly! You can access the “Selecting a Summer Camp” guide available on the Division of Early Learning website, in [English](#) and [Spanish](#), to help select the right summer camp for your child. The [Florida Department of Children and Families](#) offers tools and tips for parents and caregivers on choosing a

summer camp that meets your family’s needs. Your child’s summer camp experience should offer them a fun-filled experience in a safe and comfortable environment.

For more information on available summer camps in your area, contact your local [early learning coalition](#).



### What is the Pyramid Model framework for social-emotional literate classrooms?

The Pyramid Model framework is an approach that teachers use for relating with their students socially and emotionally. Imagine a classroom where children have clear behavioral expectations and rules, understand their emotions, listen to others and empathize with their emotions. Teachers guide children in managing their emotions and teach problem-solving skills as they nurture relationships with their students. In this classroom, children feel supported and are ready to learn. It is also a classroom where acting out is decreased and the sounds of the classroom are those of collaboration.

Since 2020, the Division of Early Learning has trained and coached 12 early learning coalitions (ELC) on the implementation of the Pyramid Model in early learning provider classrooms throughout the state. 22 ELCs are seeing the effects of this structure in their classrooms.

The goal is statewide implementation of the Pyramid Model by training additional ELCs on how they may train and coach early learning providers within their counties. This effort will allow more children to have access to high-quality socially and emotionally supportive classrooms.



### Create Fun with Crayons



A box of crayons can open a world of imagination and hours of fun. Crayons lead to self-expression, develop small muscle coordination and are a delight for young children. When a young child uses a crayon, it supports writing, creative art, math and science, as well as social and language development. Coloring with crayons help young children develop fine motor skills and supports the future development of writing skills. Additional coloring skills develop with more coloring practice. Parents and families can join in on the coloring fun!

#### Here are a few activities you can do with your child:

- Sketch or draw a self-portrait.
- Craft a heartwarming card for a friend or family member.
- Illustrate your next big idea.
- Meditate for 5 minutes with a sparkly crayon in hand to get creative thoughts flowing.
- Hang your finished picture on your fridge.

## Poison Prevention

Families can prevent poisonings by being aware of hazards not only in their own home but also in the child care center their child is attending.

Poisonings can happen quickly. Parents should take time to make sure all poison products and medicines in the household are out of a child's reach or securely locked away. When you drop your child off at their child care center or family child care home, knowing that chemical or harmful products are also out of reach there is equally important. Save the Poison Control Hotline in your phone in case of emergencies, 1-800-222-1222.

The Division of Early Learning's website provides [consumer education materials](#) for families to use when visiting a new provider or to check their child's current provider. The [Quality Checklist for Child Care Centers](#) and [Quality Checklist for Family Child Care Homes](#) includes a section dedicated to Health and Safety that helps families determine what questions to ask and what to look for when selecting a provider.

The Florida Department of Children and Families (DCF) and local licensing agencies monitor and offer inspection reports that include health and safety compliances. You can find these child care inspection reports and other resources on the [DCF provider search website](#).



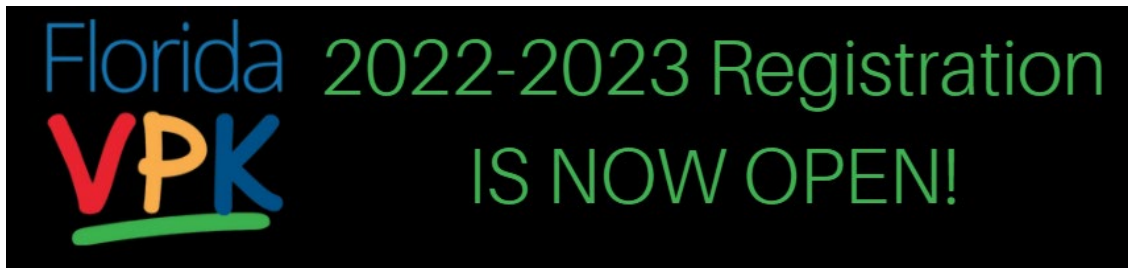
Have you thought about purchasing a Florida Prepaid College Plan? There is no time like the present. During Open Enrollment, now through April 30, 2022, when you purchase a Florida Prepaid Plan, you will receive a cash bonus of up to \$500 to help cover additional college expenses. This [Cash 4 College](#) incentive program is risk-free and comes with a 100% money back guarantee. To find out more and select the plan that will work best for you and your family, visit <https://www.myfloridaprepaid.com/>.



## Understanding Your Growing Child

The Division of Early Learning wants to help you as you set your child up for a lifetime of learning. Our First Teacher books offer guidance on your child's development and how to encourage your child to explore, learn and grow. These books, for birth to 5-year-olds, are available on the [DEL website](#) and can be viewed in English, Spanish and Creole. You may also contact your local [early learning coalition](#) for a copy.





Florida’s Voluntary Prekindergarten Education Program, or VPK, is a free educational program that prepares 4-year-olds for success in kindergarten and beyond. Children must live in Florida and be 4 on or before September 1 of the school year they enroll. Parents whose children are born between February 2 and September 1 of the calendar year may postpone enrolling their 4-year-old until the following year when their child is 5. Parents can choose from different educational settings and various program options. Private child care centers, public schools and specialized instructional service providers offer VPK. VPK Providers have flexibility to structure daily hours per week to meet the required number of instructional hours.

Registration for the 2022-2023 year is now open; to register your child for VPK, simply visit the Family Portal at <https://familyservices.floridaearlylearning.com> to complete the application process.

• **VPK School-Year Program - 540 Instructional Hours:** Class sizes are not to exceed 11 students with a single lead instructor or up to 20 students with a lead instructor and an assistant. Instructors must have a minimum of a Florida Child Care Professional Credential.

• **VPK Summer Program - 300 Instructional Hours:** Classes are not to exceed 12 students with a single lead instructor. Instructors must have a minimum of a bachelor's degree.

• **VPK Specialized Instructional Services (SIS) Education Program, VPK SIS:** Takes place outside a traditional classroom setting and is designed for 4-year-olds with special needs who have current individualized educational plans from local school districts. More information regarding VPK SIS is available at <http://www.floridaearlylearning.com/vpk/vpk-providers/specialized-instructional-services-providers>.



Richard Corcoran  
Commissioner of Education

Matthew H. Mears  
Chancellor



250 Marriott Drive  
Tallahassee, FL 23399  
Toll Free: 866-357-3239  
[www.floridaearlylearning.com](http://www.floridaearlylearning.com)