

Inspiring Scientific Inquiry...Florida-style!

By Amanda Moore, Northeast VPK Regional Facilitator

Florida's children have a unique advantage. Where else can you visit a beach, lake, river or spring within minutes? Watch a rocket launch? Plant a garden any time of year? See a marine mammal such as a dolphin or manatee in their natural habitat? Learn about bears and alligators out of curiosity **and** necessity? Our entire state is one big outdoor classroom, and there are many free resources available to help VPK teachers promote exploration, observation and discovery.



The Florida State Parks' [Junior Ranger Program](#) offers many activity ideas related to Florida's birds, animals, habitats and more. Did you know the world famous Weeki Wachi Mermaids and Princes will respond to hand-written letters and drawings (Tail Mail) on their social media pages?

- Take-home tip: Florida's state trails and greenways are always free to visit, and most state parks have low- or no-cost admission fees. Students can help create a scavenger hunt list for exploring parks or even their own back yards.

[NASA Kids' Club](#) is a safe, interactive site that allows aspiring astronauts to explore science, technology, engineering and mathematical standards through fun games and pictures.

- Take-home tip: Apps such as Google SkyMap or ISS Detector are fun ways for families to identify planets and constellations or watch the International Space Station as it passes by!

Sometimes known as the local extension office or 4-H program, the [University of Florida's Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences](#) offers a wealth of information on Florida's life sciences, natural resources, and sustainability. Learn how to plant a pizza garden, when to look for nesting birds or how to creatively reduce, reuse and recycle.

- Take-home tip: Contact your local IFAS office to request a presentation for your program or schedule of upcoming classes for parents.

[The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission](#) is an essential source for any hunter, boater or fisherman. It is also a great place to find lesson plan ideas related to native animals such as gopher tortoises, panthers, sea turtles and more.

- Take-home tip: Encourage children to keep a journal for bird watching, butterfly viewing, or noting nuisance neighbors like raccoons or opossums!



RULES

[MARCH 7, 2018](#)
[RULE 6A-4.01411](#)
EQUIVALENT
CREDENTIALS FOR
THE VPK EDUCATION
PROGRAM FOR
SCHOOL YEAR
INSTRUCTORS

Remember to check our site regularly for a listing of proposed rules and notices.

<http://bit.ly/2gkcQIN>



Coming Soon!!!

Early Learning and Developmental Standards Website

The Office of Early Learning is pleased to share information about the new Florida Early Learning and Developmental Standards website which will be available soon.

This site includes the revised Early Learning and Developmental Standards: Birth to Kindergarten (2017) and related resources through the collaboration of the Child Care Resource and Referral, School Readiness and VPK program units within the Office of Early Learning.

The following features and resources will be added to the new website over the next few months as new information becomes available.

Educator guides

Standard examples

Links to resources including videos

Family resources

Please feel free to contact Melinda Webster at Melinda.Webster@oel.myflorida.com with questions.

“We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence then is not an act, but a habit.” ~ Aristotle

Be in the Loop!

VPK Learning Circles are ongoing opportunities for early childhood professionals to share strategies, research and best practices in VPK classrooms. Learning Circle activities include

- Practicing new ideas and skills.
- Professional networking.
- Sharing resources and experiences.
- Discussion and brainstorming solutions for challenges faced in the field.

Who should attend?

VPK providers, directors, teachers and administrators who would like an opportunity to network with other professionals in early childhood education.

Who do you contact for more information about Learning Circles?

Your local VPK regional facilitator organizes and facilitates the Learning Circles. You can find contact information for your regional facilitator on the OEL website.



	January Circles	January Participants	Total Learning Circles in 2017-18	Total Participants in 2017-18
Face-to-Face	15	240	184	885
Web-Based	8	156	10	39

Professional Development

Florida's Office of Early Learning in collaboration with the Florida Department of Children and Families (DCF) offers a variety of online and instructor-led training opportunities. To register for any of these training opportunities, please visit DCF's training website at <http://bit.ly/1oHgYPm>.

Online Courses	January Completers	2017-18 Total Completers
Standards for Four-Year-Olds	225	2077
Integrating the Standards: Phonological Awareness	30	234
Emergent Literacy for VPK Instructors	447	3159
Language and Vocabulary in the VPK Classroom	147	663
Mathematical Thinking for Early Learners	210	804
Working to Create Positive Learning Environments: Preventive Strategies	119	488
Developing the Socially and Emotionally Competent Child	88	320
English Language Learners in the VPK Classroom	74	379
How to Administer the Florida VPK Assessment	62	527
VPK Assessment Instructional Implications	32	254
VPK Director Credential Course	82	565

Instructor-led Courses	January Classes	January Participants	2017-18 Total Participants
Standards for Four-Year-Olds	1	17	112
Integrating the Standards: Phonological Awareness	4	25	234
How to Administer the Florida VPK Assessment	4	15	350
VPK Assessment Instructional Implications	4	19	249
*EMEL: Making Sense of Sets and Numbers	10	133	611
*EMEL: Counting and Operating with Numbers	4	28	427
*EMEL: Patterns, Measurement and Data	12	140	530
*EMEL: Shapes and Spatial Relationships	5	55	269

*EMEL– Early Mathematics for Early Learners