

Early Learning Parents' Pages

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE DIVISION OF EARLY LEARNING

Florida Assessment of Student Thinking (FAST) using Star Early Literacy®

Second Assessment Under Way

If you have a child in the current Voluntary Prekindergarten Program (VPK), your provider is now administering the second administration of this year's Florida Assessment of Student Thinking (FAST) using Star Early Literacy. This statewide progress monitoring system was launched during the 2021-2022 program year as a way to gauge early literacy and numeracy skills.

Aligned with the [Florida Early Learning and Developmental Standards](#) for 4-year-olds, Star Early Literacy® is a computer-adaptive assessment that uses narrated audio to read questions to students, with the questions getting easier or more difficult depending on how the student responds.

Star Early Literacy® aims to provide information to help teachers plan instruction as well as provide timely information to parents about their child's progress.

Please reach out to your child's teacher or program director to learn more about progress monitoring through Star Early Literacy®.



Contact Your Early Learning Coalition

Whether you want to apply for School Readiness services, enroll in the Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) program or get information about other early education resources, the place to start is with your local early learning coalition. Contact your local [early learning coalition](#) for more information.



VPK Program Highlights

- High-quality educational program with an early literacy focus.
- Free for all 4-year-olds who reside in the state of Florida.
- Participating children must be 4 years of age on or before September 1.
- Parents whose children are born from February 2 through September 1 of a calendar year may choose to enroll their child either that year or the next when the child is 5, prior to being enrolled in kindergarten.
- Parent choice is a priority. Both private and public child care providers participate.



If you would like to learn more about Florida's VPK program, contact your local [early learning coalition](#).

To register for the 2023-2024 VPK Program year, visit the [Family Portal](#).

Florida
School Readiness

Florida's School Readiness Program (SR) offers financial assistance to help children receive high-quality childcare and education so their parents can work or participate in job training. The program recognizes parents and caregivers as their child's first teacher. To apply for the SR Program, visit the [Family Portal](#).

C C R & R
Child Care Resource and Referral

Are you a parent with questions about child care services available to your child? The statewide Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) network can help. The Division of Early Learning partners with 30 early learning coalitions. Each coalition has a local CCR&R team that provides services to families, child care providers and communities. To find a CCR&R program in your area contact 1-866-357-3239 or contact your local [early learning coalition](#).

CELEBRATION OF THE HANDS

Each year, [Children's Week Florida™](#) partners and volunteers come together to hang a larger than life visual inside the Capitol Rotunda. The display is constructed from thousands of pieces of vibrant and beautiful children's hand artwork from across the state. This incredible work of art serves as a daily reminder to legislators, advocates and visitors that the future of our children rests in their hands.

We invite you to join in on the fun and be a part of the 2023 display! Decorate and submit hands with colorful artwork, words, stories and/or pictures to share with legislators and Capitol visitors – there is no limit to your creativity!

The 2023 Celebration of the Hands will take place March 26-31, 2023, in the Capitol Rotunda in Tallahassee, FL.

Below are helpful tips for creating hand artwork to be included in the upcoming Celebration of the Hands display:

- Your hand artwork pieces should be connected using items that will easily adhere to the large ropes used during the week-long display. This includes twine, string, yarn or wide ribbon (please do not send individual hands).
- Staple, tape and secure artwork vertically onto string or ribbon in lengths of no more than 8 feet to create the "hanging" effect.
- If you have many hands of art, please separate them and string together before mailing (no more than 8 feet per string of hands).
- You may also use the hands to create small posters to be included in the display. These should be no larger than 11" x 17". Vertical or horizontal orientation is acceptable.
- If using glue, glitter or other embellishments, please allow 2-3 days of drying time before packaging your artwork.

Artwork must be mailed by **Friday, March 10, 2023**, to be included in the large display.

Please mail your packages to our 2023 Partner and Community Artwork Host at the address below:

Early Learning Coalition of the Big Bend Region
Attn: Community Relations - Children's Week
2639 N. Monroe Street, Bldg. C, Ste. 200
Tallahassee, FL 32303



A graphic with a red and blue background. On the left, there are two circular images: the top one shows a group of diverse children walking and smiling, and the bottom one shows a young child with glasses looking at a blue liquid in a beaker. On the right, the text reads "SAVE THE DATE!" in large white letters, followed by "MARCH 26-31 2023" in white. Below this is the Children's Week logo with the tagline "Because Every Child Matters" and the website "childrensweek.org". At the bottom left, there is a QR code and the text "Join us at the Capitol!".

Manny Diaz, Jr.
Commissioner

Matthew H. Mears
Chancellor



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