



# Parents' Pages

*The Official Newsletter of the Division of Early Learning*

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## Learn a Literacy Skill in the New Year!

It is never too early to begin reading and talking with your child to provide a solid foundation in reading. As your child's first teacher, the foundational structure for their learning starts with you.

During the first five years, your child's brain undergoes its most significant development. Reading to your child for 15-20 minutes daily supports their language development and fosters critical thinking skills. Read a variety of books to your child and sing songs with rhyming words to build vocabulary. Keep books available in your child's diaper bag, backpack and on the back seat of your car.

**You may ask questions and share details about the story you are reading with your child:**

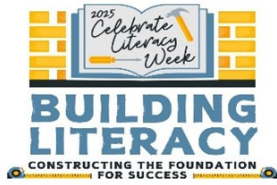
- What did you enjoy the most about the story?
- Who was your favorite character and why?
- What was your favorite part of the book?
- Would you like me to read this book again?

Incorporate a variety of language and reading experiences when your child is playing. Learning through play is always enjoyable and engaging. Your child gains knowledge and skills through playing and interacting with you.

Here are a few suggested children's books to read as well as developmentally appropriate toys to play with:

- Read nursery rhymes, poems, musicals and interactive books with your child. **(Birth - 5 years)**
- Play with soft alphabet blocks as a fun introduction to alphabet letters. **(6 months - 3 years)**
- Stack wooden alphabet blocks to form short words such as "cat." **(18 months - 5 years)**
- Assemble alphabet wooden peg puzzles to introduce alphabet letters, provide sensory stimulation and support fine motor skill development. **(24 months - 4 years)**
- Explore with an A-Z magnetic letter set. As you communicate and play with the alphabet letters, your child will learn the alphabet as well as fine motor and vocabulary skills. **(24 months - 5 years)**

To learn more about how to engage your child in language or reading experiences and what your child should be learning, visit the [Florida Early Learning and Developmental Standards](#).



#DELCelebratesEarlyLiteracy

## 2025 Celebrate Literacy Week, Florida!

The Florida Department of Education is committed to raising awareness about the importance of reading and inspiring families to make reading part of their daily routines. [Celebrate Literacy Week, Florida!](#), which is January 27-31, emphasizes the importance of early literacy development as an essential part of a child's early education and is supported with the theme **Building Literacy: Constructing the Foundation for Success**.

The Division of Early Learning (DEL) supports Celebrate Literacy Week, Florida! from an early learning perspective in partnership with providers. DEL's focus is interactive reading and play that can deepen a child's foundational early literacy knowledge. Early learning providers are encouraged to support early literacy with age-appropriate topics.

Mark your calendars for a simultaneous reading on Wednesday, January 29, at 10 a.m. (EST) as families and providers spread the love of literacy by reading *Little Excavator* by Anna Dewdney to infants and toddlers (birth to 3-year-olds) and *Dig Dig Digging* by Margaret Mayo to preschoolers (3- to 5-year-olds).

The **New Worlds Reading Initiative** is a free Florida literacy program for Voluntary Prekindergarten students and Kindergarten-5th grade public or charter school students who are not yet reading at grade level. This statewide book delivery program is a collaborative effort with the Florida Department of Education, University of Florida Laster Center, school districts and other local and state organizations.

Enrollment flyers are available in [English](#) (PDF), [Spanish](#) (PDF) and [Haitian Creole](#) (PDF). Enroll at [New Worlds Reading Initiative](#).



## Developmental Screenings

Did you know that from birth to age 5, a child's brain develops faster than at any other time in their life? During these years, your child will experience rapid advancement in many cognitive, motor, social and language skills. A priority of the School Readiness program is to monitor a child's progress by offering parents the chance to complete the Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ). The ASQ is a developmental screening tool designed for parents to complete regarding their child's development. It can also be completed with the support of the child care provider.

The screening is easy to use, family-friendly and creates a snapshot of children's development. It helps identify developmental delays early, reducing the risk of a child falling behind in school by alerting parents to access needed support or services. The screening helps both parents and child care providers in understanding a child's strengths and areas where he/she may need more support. This information is important to helping children succeed. For more information on the ASQ developmental screening, contact your [local Early Learning Coalition](#) or visit [Developmental Screening](#).

## Sharing the Importance of Giving Back

A new year is a wonderful time to help your child learn the importance of giving back. Teaching children the value of kindness and generosity can have a lasting impact on their lives and the community. There are countless ways to involve your child and your family in your local area. Volunteering at a senior center, donating clothes to a shelter or volunteering at a local food bank are just a few ideas. Encourage your child to do thoughtful acts, like writing thank you notes to first responders or baking cookies for neighbors.

By involving your child in acts of kindness, you're not only helping others but also teaching your child valuable life lessons about empathy and community spirit. The [Florida Early Learning and Developmental Standards](#) can help you support your child's development and learning. Teaching kindness and generosity aligns with one of the early learning standards: Building and Maintaining Relationships with Adults and Peers.



COMMISSIONER'S  
BOOK OF THE MONTH

Commissioner Manny Diaz, Jr.'s [Commissioner's Book of the Month](#) is a monthly reading challenge to promote literacy and reading engagement. View the website to find books to read with your family.

IT'S OKAY TO  
PLAY IN VPK!

It's Okay to Play in VPK! What Families Should Know About Playing with a Purpose is the first in a two-part series and is based on the [Florida Early Learning and Developmental Standards](#). The workshop introduces families to the standards as families learn why play is critical in a child's development. Families can learn to choose quality, everyday activities and environments that help get their child ready for kindergarten.

For more information, contact your [local early learning coalition](#).

## Child Tax Credit

The Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit is a valuable benefit for many families. This credit is designed to help offset the costs of care for eligible children and dependents. The IRS provides an Interactive Tax Assistant to help determine eligibility.

If you have specific questions about how to claim this credit or need more details on eligibility, visit [irs.gov](#).



## Family Fun Activities

A great teaching moment is finding things to do that are fun and educational. The following activities apply the Scientific Inquiry standard found on the [Florida Early Learning and Developmental Standards web page](#).

- Do water and oil mix? (2 - 4 years) - Materials: 16-ounce empty water bottle, cooking oil, water, measuring spoons, measuring cups and food coloring. Measure 1 cup of water and pour into the 16-ounce empty water bottle. Then measure 1 tablespoon of cooking oil, add one or two drops of food coloring of your child's choice and pour into the water bottle. Help your child securely place the top on the water bottle. Shake and observe.



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- Static electricity (8 months - 4 years) - Blow up a balloon. Stand in front of a mirror. Rub it back and forth on your hair. Raise the balloon from your head. Show your child the static connection from your hair to the balloon. Let your child rub the balloon on your head to see the reaction.
- Solid or Liquid? (18 months - 4 years) - Mix 2 cups of cornstarch with 1 cup of water. As the mixture sits, put the child's fingers lightly on top so they can feel their fingers sink as the substance turns more liquid.
- Sink or Float? (8 months - 4 years) - Fill a bathtub, bin or sink with water and place a variety of objects in the water to test whether they will sink or float. Crayons, paper clips and bath toys are some items you may use.

 Manny Diaz, Jr.  
Commissioner of Education

 Cari Miller  
Chancellor of Early Learning



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