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Early Learning Parents' Pages

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE DIVISION OF EARLY LEARNING

Don't Let the Holiday Break Be a Break from Learning

Don't let the upcoming holiday break create a break in your child's learning momentum.

If your child's teacher sends home ideas for activities, educational toys, songs, games or books to enjoy with your child during the holidays, take advantage of the ideas and follow up by asking about any specific learning or developmental stages on which you can work with your child. The [Florida Early Learning and Developmental Standards](#) can help guide your conversation with your child's teacher and help you identify developmentally appropriate toys and gifts.

There are many ways to support your child's learning and development during the holidays.



For example, volunteer at a local food bank, bake cookies or create holiday cards for seniors in your community, or donate to a local homeless shelter. Help your child identify toys, clothing and shoes they have outgrown that you can donate to a local church, community charity or family in need. Ask your child what they think community service is and what they might like to do and try to give them that experience. The [standards](#) can help you support your child's understanding of community and involvement. After the activity, encourage your child to talk about their experience. Ask open-ended questions that make them use words and ideas they have learned.

Remember the Season

The holidays are a great time to show appreciation to your child's teacher for partnering with you for your child's early learning journey. Help your child write or create a thank you note. Encourage your child to draw a picture to give to their teacher as a heartfelt token of appreciation or create a gift basket with your child that includes the teacher's favorite snacks or treats. Consider donating classroom supplies to support the teacher's efforts of maintaining a safe and healthy environment. Remember, small acts of kindness go a long way in showing gratitude for all that your child's teacher does.



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Preparing for VPK Open Enrollment

Registration for the 2024-2025 Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) school year begins in January, so you may want to start learning about providers in your area now.

Florida was one of the first states in the nation to offer free VPK, and the program is open to all 4-year-olds living in the state. State data shows that children who participate in VPK are better prepared to enter kindergarten ready to learn.

If you have a question about how to identify quality child care and early education programs or how to locate a provider who meets your family's needs, you can find answers through the Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) State Network. To locate a CCR&R office in your area, contact your early learning coalition or call (toll-free) 1-866-357-3239.

Families can choose from different educational settings and various program options. Private child care centers, public schools and family child care homes offer VPK, and these providers have flexibility to structure daily hours per week to meet the required number of instructional hours.

The **VPK School-Year Program** provides 540 instructional hours, while the **VPK Summer Program** offers 300 instructional hours.

VPK Specialized Instructional Services (VPK SIS) Program takes place outside a traditional classroom setting and is for 4-year-olds with special needs and current individual educational plans from local school districts.

To apply, visit the [Family Portal](#).

Keep Books Present

Your child will be more likely to pick up a book and read if books are accessible. Keep books in the kitchen, car, your child's room, on bookshelves and other locations where your child spends time.



The Commissioner's Book of the Month provides early learners a monthly PreK book option. Be **sure to visit** [Commissioner's Book of the Month](#), for more information.



Eligible VPK-Grade 5 students receive free books on a monthly basis until the student exits fifth grade. For more information, visit newworldsreading.com.