

Early Learning Parents' Pages

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE DIVISION OF EARLY LEARNING

New Year – New Skills

The foundational language skills needed to read and write begin to develop from the time a child is born and continue to develop over time. There are many things you can do with your child at home to support their development as readers and writers.

1. **Have ongoing and engaging conversations with your child.** Talk to your newborn and respond to their sounds, cries and coos. For example, when not holding your child, talk with him or her as you move around the room, saying, “Here I am!” When your child finds you, say, “Here I am!”
2. **Create literacy-friendly environments.** Make sure you have books, magazines and other reading materials in your home that are appropriate for the age of your child.
3. **Make reading enjoyable.** Read with your child in a comfortable place. Make reading to your child a part of your daily routine.
4. **Hold high expectations for your child’s learning.** Learn the expectations for each developmentally appropriate literacy skill your child needs to master for each age level. Understand that skills build upon each other to lead to mastery of higher-level skills. The [Families section](#) of the [Florida Early Learning and Developmental Standards](#) on the [Division of Early Learning’s website](#) sets out the appropriate literacy skills for each age along with activities for these skills.
5. **Communicate with your child’s teacher.** If your child is in child care, preschool or kindergarten, ask your child’s teacher for activities you can do to support your child’s literacy development at home. Ask the teacher to identify any concerns they have about your child’s literacy development.
6. **Use your home language with your child.** If your family’s first language is not English, read books to your child in your home language. You can find books online and at your local library in many languages.
7. **Visit the library.** The local library offers many resources for families with young children. The librarians will help you find age-appropriate books, videos and games for your child. Check out materials you can use at home. When your child is old enough, let them select books and other resources they would like to take home. Make a special place in your home to keep the materials you take home.



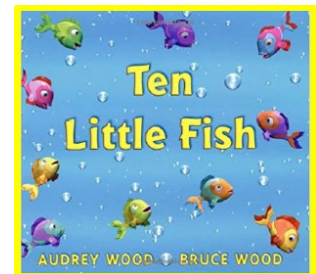


2023 Celebrate Literacy Week, Florida!



The Florida Department of Education’s (FDOE) Division of Early Learning is collaborating with FDOE’s Just Read, Florida! office for the 15th annual statewide Celebrate Literacy Week, Florida! Celebrate Literacy Week, Florida! 2023 is scheduled for the week of January 23-27, 2023. This year, the theme is Take a Deep Dive Into Literacy – Splash Into New Worlds!

Mark your calendars for the simultaneous reading activity on Wednesday, January 25, at 9 a.m. (EST). Providers and families will spread the love of literacy in their homes, centers and schools by reading *Ten Little Fish* by Audrey and Bruce Wood to infants and toddlers (birth to 3-year-olds) and to preschoolers (3- to 5-year-olds). While this book is suggested, another book may be used to engage young children with a focus on new experiences.



Florida VPK

Registration for the 2023-2024 Voluntary Prekindergarten Program (VPK) is now open! 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.

To register your child for VPK, visit the Family Portal at <https://familyservices.floridaearlylearning.com> to complete the sign-up process.

For more information on the VPK Program visit [Families | DEL \(floridaearlylearning.com\)](https://families.del.floridaearlylearning.com) and families may also download the [VPK Parent Handbook](#).



Overview

Florida's School Readiness Program (SR) offers financial assistance to help children from low-income families receive high-quality childcare and education, so their parents can work or participate in job training.

The program gives children access to an early learning environment and supports parents with information about child development and family well-being.

The program recognizes parents and caregivers as their child's first teacher.



How do I apply for the School Readiness Program?

You can [apply online](#) from a computer, laptop, tablet or cellphone.

If you have questions about the program, contact your local early learning coalition. A map of the 30 coalitions in Florida and the Redlands Christian Migrant Association can be found on the [Division of Early Learning website](#).

You can also receive more information about the School Readiness Program and how to apply by calling the toll-free family line at the Division of Early Learning at 1-866-357-3239 (TTY: 711).



The [Family Resource Support Center](#) serves as a central hub for the community to access needed resources and supports. The Florida Department of Children and Families has staff who specialize in disaster recovery response and public benefit eligibility specialists to help individuals and families who have been affected by recent storms.

For more information call 850-300-HOPE.

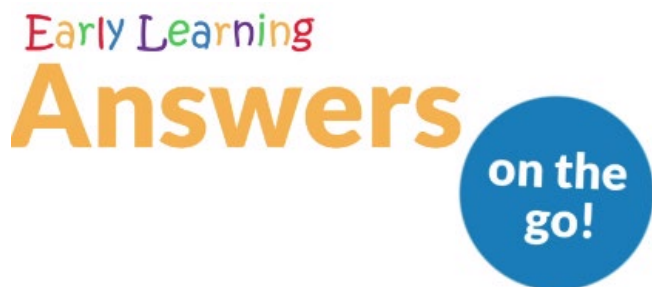
Fatherly Advice for Dads

Anthony Montalvo raised seven children on his own as a single father in New York City. Nearly 22 years later, Montalvo is now providing the kind of support to fathers that he could have used, with his new initiative Dads on Call.

The Early Learning Coalition of Brevard County (ELC Brevard) recently invited him to share with new dads tips for fully engaging in their children's lives.

Founder of Dads on Call, Montalvo's vision is to encourage fathers to embrace support systems and resources, and the positive impact of Florida's School Readiness program.

Several fathers and their children attended the program, participating in a "Reading Circle" as ELC Brevard staff read books and discussed the importance of reading. Child Care Resource & Referral staff shared the importance of being engaged in their child's education. Both fathers and children received free haircuts and free books.



The Division of Early Learning and the University of Florida's Lastinger Center for Learning have developed videos to increase and support parent education on a wide range of topics around parenting, child development and community services available to meet the needs of your family. Visit [Early Learning Answers on the Go | DEL \(floridaearlylearning.com\)](http://floridaearlylearning.com) to learn more. Videos are available in English and Spanish.



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