

# EARLY LEARNING PARENTS' PAGES

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE OFFICE OF EARLY LEARNING

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Day



## VPK Registration 2020-2021 Program Year



Florida's Voluntary Prekindergarten Education Program, or **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 Feb. 2 and Sept. 1 of the calendar year may postpone enrolling their 4-year-old until the following year when their child is 5. Parents of 4-year-olds with special needs have an option outside the classroom setting - VPK Specialized Instructional Services (VPK-SIS). More information regarding SIS may be found at <http://www.floridaearlylearning.com/vpk/vpk-providers/specialized-instructional-services-providers>.

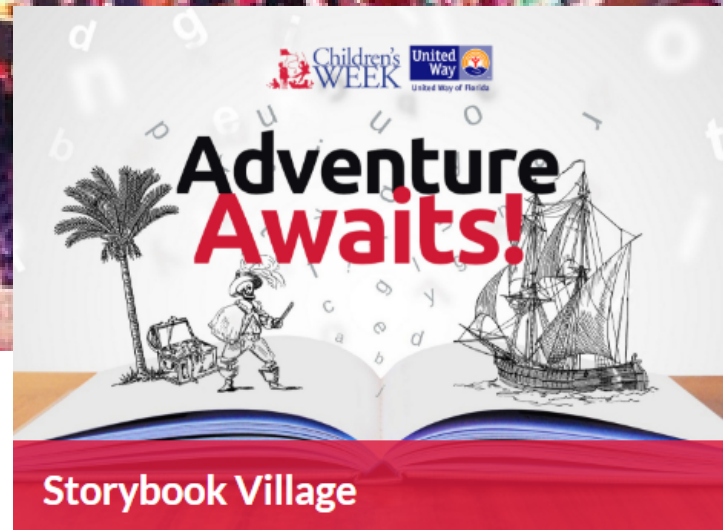
To register your child for VPK, simply visit the Family Portal at <https://familyservices.floridaearlylearning.com/> where you will create an account and complete the application process.

Parents may also contact their local early learning coalition for additional information and assistance. Parents can find their local early learning coalition's contact information at <http://www.floridaearlylearning.com/family-resources/find-quality-child-care/locate-your-early-learning-coalition>.





## CHILDREN'S WEEK 2020



Children's  
WEEK



United Way of Florida

The week of January 26 – 31, 2020 is designated as **Children's Week in Florida**. Children's Week is a time to focus the attention of the people of Florida, especially those who make state policies, on issues that affect children and their families. Hundreds of people from throughout the state attend the events during Children's Week to learn more about the current issues and policies related to children and to advocate for policies that provide support for children and their families.

On Sunday, January 26, everyone is invited to meet in Tallahassee to **hang handprints** of children from across the state in the Rotunda of the Capitol. If you would like to have your child's handprint included, you can help them make a handprint on paper or trace your child's hand and have them color or decorate the handprint and cut it out. Write their name and the name of your city on the back. Then, mail or take it to the local early learning coalition or mail it to the Big Bend Early Learning Coalition (see address below). All artwork must be postmarked by January 17.

During the week many **events** will take place including the Children's Week Awards Dinner, Children's Day at the Capitol featuring the Storybook Village and the Teens Town Hall Meeting. Throughout the state, groups such as the early learning coalitions and their partners will be hosting local events. To find local events for Children's Week, contact your **local early learning coalition** or find information here: <https://childrensweek.org/events/category/local-events/>.

Mail children's handprints to:  
Morgan Evers  
Early Learning Coalition of the Big Bend Region  
2639 N. Monroe Street, Building C  
Tallahassee, FL 32303



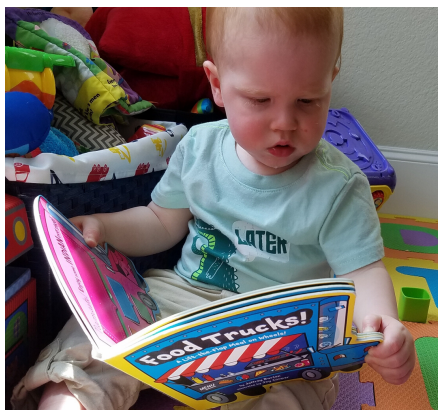
# CELEBRATE LITERACY WEEK, FLORIDA!

The Just Read, Florida! office has designated the week of January 27 – 31, 2020 as the 12th annual statewide Celebrate Literacy Week, Florida! (CLW). The 2020 CLW theme is **BOOK Your Trip! Adventure Awaits!** and lends itself to many exciting adventures through the use of literature.

Please join us in this year's **simultaneous reading activity** on **Wednesday, January 29, at 9 a.m. (EST)**. Families and child care providers will spread the love of literacy in their homes, centers and schools by reading **Grumpy Bird, by Jeremy Tankard** to infants and toddlers (birth to 3-year-olds), and **Rooster's Off to See the World, by Eric Carle** to preschoolers (3 to 5-year-olds).

Celebrate Literacy Week, Florida! is sponsored by the Florida Department of Education (FDOE), in partnership with other FDOE offices, the Office of Early Learning (OEL), school districts, early learning coalitions and numerous other state agencies.

Please visit the OEL website at: <http://bit.ly/providerresources2020> for additional information concerning CLW.



# CELEBRATE LITERACY IN YOUR HOME



As your child's first teacher, there are many things you can do with your child at home to support their literacy development. You can start your child on the path to reading by **reading to your child every day**, starting at birth. Take a book with you to the hospital and you can start your child on their reading journey the day they are born! Continue reading to your child as often as possible. Make bedtime stories part of your child's bedtime ritual. Read signs, menus, labels, advertisements, magazines and newspapers throughout the day as you ride in the car or bus or go about your daily routines.

**The Center for Early Literacy Learning (CELL)** has developed materials for families to use that provide fun and exciting literacy activities for their children. Their **Practice Guides for Parents** include everyday home activities that encourage early literacy and are available to download in English as well as Spanish for families with infants, toddlers and preschoolers. If you have a child with a disability, there are **Practice Guides with Adaptations**. **CELLcasts** are audio/visual versions of the CELL Parent Practice Guides and can be used to watch and listen online or download to a personal device. **CELL Pops** have suggestions for activities you can use with your infant, toddler or preschooler to incorporate literacy learning throughout the day. There is also an **Interest-Based Everyday Literacy Activity Checklist** to discover the activities your child will enjoy doing at home with you.

The **Reading Rockets website** features a newsletter for parents - **Growing Readers** - as well as:

- **10 Things You Can Do to Raise a Reader**
- **Reading Adventure Packs for Families**
- **25 Activities for Reading and Writing Fun**

All of these activities and materials help you provide an environment in your home that encourages your child to **love to read**:

- Look for new books and authors that your child may enjoy.**
- Organize an area dedicated to reading and writing tools.**
- Visit the library for story time and book recommendations.**
- Encourage your child to talk about what he's read.**
- Talk to your child, and sprinkle interesting words into your conversation**
- Offer a variety of books to read.**

- Read with your child every day.**
- Expand your home library to include magazines and nonfiction.**
- Ask questions if you're concerned about your child's development.**
- Decide to raise a reader!**

See what Dr. Hutton says about "Build Baby's Brain With Books" on the next page!



## BUILD BABY'S BRAIN WITH BOOKS!

From birth to 12 months it's all about...  
**SOUNDS, WORDS & FEELINGS!**

### NEWBORN

**Start now!** A nurturing family routine of reading aloud every day from birth will help your baby feel safe, loved, and ready for school and life.



Read aloud slowly and exaggerate sounds.

Babies love books with real pictures and bold contrasts.



### 1-2 MONTHS

**Smile!** Babies love faces and making emotional connections with people. They look, they listen, they feel...

### 2-5 MONTHS

**Oohs and ahs!** Your baby's coos are more than cute – they're vowels! By practicing with loved ones, your baby is figuring out which sounds are important to learn to talk.



Chewing books is normal - a sign of teething! Let baby explore sturdy board books by holding them, turning pages and even tasting!



### 5-9 MONTHS

**A babbling brook...** Through all of that drool, you'll hear "mama," "dada," "baba," and more. Your baby is practicing consonants, new sounds to help them talk.



Reading aloud together is so important to develop your baby's vocabulary. Beyond favorite books, pick new ones that provide new words and experiences. All of these words add up quickly!

### 9-12 MONTHS

**Talk to me!** Like magic, all of a sudden your baby starts putting those coo (vowel) and babble (consonant) sounds together to make wonderful words!



**DR. JOHN S. HUTTON**  
Pediatrician & Assistant Professor  
Cincinnati Children's Hospital  
Reading & Literacy Discovery Center

It isn't just baby's body that is growing this first year — baby's brain is developing even more rapidly! Give your baby the best start by reading aloud every day, for at least **15 MINUTES**, right from birth.



Learn more at  
[ReadAloud.org](http://ReadAloud.org)



## VISION SCREENING FOR CHILDREN

Children should have their **vision checked** when they are born, as an infant, during preschool and when they start to school. This can be done by your child's doctor or at a vision screening or health screening event. Many schools and community health centers conduct vision screenings for children at the beginning of the school year. The vision system is not fully formed in infants and young children, so it is important to monitor the development of their vision to ensure your child's vision is normal. Early detection of vision concerns increases the effectiveness of treatment. If your child fails a vision screening, they should be referred to an eye doctor for a complete eye exam. This includes a full exam of the eye and the visual system to diagnosis any visual problems. More information can be found [here](#).

### Prevalence and Impact of Vision Disorders in U.S. Children

**Amblyopia can be found in 2% of children 6-72 months old**

Amblyopia is when vision in one or both eyes does not develop properly during childhood. It is sometimes called lazy eye.

**3% of children younger than 18 years are blind or visually impaired**

**Hyperopia occurs in 21% of children, ages 6-72 months and 13% of children, ages 5-17 years**

Hyperopia (farsightedness), is a refractive error, which means that the eye does not bend or refract light properly to a single focus to see images clearly.

**Between 2-4% of children under the age of 6 have strabismus**

Strabismus is a visual problem in which the eyes are not aligned properly and point in different directions.

**Astigmatism occurs in 15-28% of children ages 5-17 years**

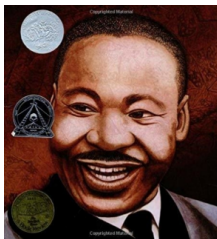
Astigmatism is an imperfection in the curvature of your eye's cornea or lens.

**Myopia occurs in 4% of children, ages 6-72 months and 9% of children, ages 5-17 years**

Myopia (nearsightedness) is a refractive error. Refractive error is when the eye does not bend (refract) light properly.



Monday, January 20, 2020



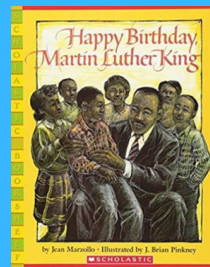
## MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. DAY

The third Monday of every January is a federal holiday to celebrate Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday. It is a day to honor his legacy and the impact he had on civil rights work.

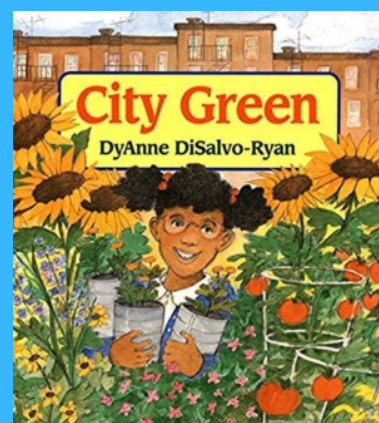
This day is recognized as a National Day of Service to encourage people all over the country to work together to make a difference in their local communities. Around age 4, children can begin making connections of fairness and unfairness to their personal experiences and you, as a parent, can begin teaching your child about empathy. Engage your child in learning more about equity and bias and the life of Martin Luther King Jr. by **reading children's books, making a storybook or other activities.**

When you and your child are reading and talking about the stories you read together, you can use the stories to teach your child empathy. Empathy is understanding how another person feels. You can also teach empathy by talking about your feelings and their feelings when reading books about children who are unkind to others. Teach your child to take turns and treat others with kindness. Be a model for your child in the way you treat others. Ask your child how they feel when someone treats them unkindly.

Another way you can celebrate Martin Luther King Jr. Day is by giving your child photos of family, neighbors, or friends who they think make things better or help others. Let your child use the pictures to make a collage or story about each person. You can learn more about how to help your child develop empathy [here](#).



Here are a few children's books about Martin Luther King Jr., fiction and nonfiction books about ordinary people who stand up for what's right, and stories about helping others and giving back.



## Special Dates in January

1 - New Year's Day

11 - National Milk Day

18 - Winnie the Pooh Day

8 - Bubble Bath Day

13 - Make Your Dream Come True Day

20 - Martin Luther King Jr. Day

Richard Corcoran  
Commissioner of Education  
Shan Goff  
Executive Director OEL



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