

January 2022 – Vol. 8 Issue 1

Early Learning

Parents' Pages

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE DIVISION OF EARLY LEARNING

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BRAILLE ALPHABET

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Mark your calendar for

January 30 – February 4, 2022

Children's Week Florida began over 35 years ago and continues to be Florida's largest statewide event to celebrate its commitment to children, youth and advocates. This weeklong event will take place January 30 – February 4, 2022, in-person at the State Capitol. Children's Week is a time to focus on children and their families. Hundreds of people from across the state attend the events during Children's Week.

Annually, young children, their families and teachers create beautiful handprint artwork that is displayed in the Capitol Rotunda. The display entitled the "Celebration of the Hands" remains on display throughout Children's Week.

Children's Day will be observed on February 1 in the Capitol Courtyard and in the Rotunda. Throughout the day, attendees of all ages can take part in interactive events and educational activities with a focus on young children. The signature event is Storybook Village, which brings to life various children's books through reading and activities.



Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

This month we celebrate Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s birthday on Monday January 17, to remember his life and legacy. This day is known as a ***Day of Service***. Everyone is encouraged to work in their communities in ways that honor Dr. King's life and teachings. Dr. King said, "No work is insignificant. All labor that uplifts humanity had dignity and importance. If I cannot do great things, I can do small things in a great way." His goal was to serve and help others make their lives better.

How can your family make a difference?

You can make a difference by teaching your child how to do things for others in your family and community. Help your child find things they can do to make your neighborhood or community better. Some ideas could be:

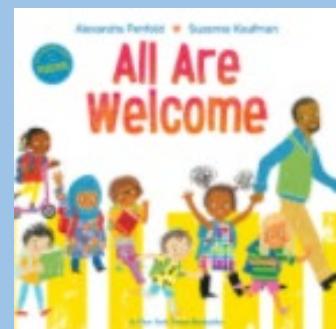
- Donate unused and unwanted toys to a church or school.
- Host a bake sale with your child and have proceeds go to a local charity.
- Donate books to a children's hospital or early learning center.

You can read your child a book about Dr. King and talk about ways his life has made life better for many people in our families, communities and country. You can find picture books at your local library to help teach about Dr. King's life and legacy that your child will enjoy.

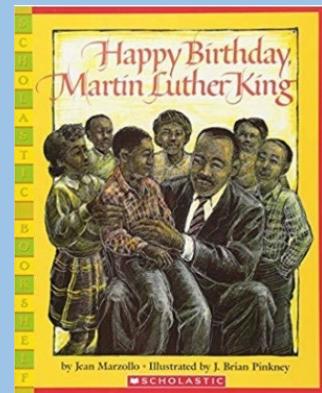
Martin Luther King Jr. Day Book Ideas:



"Martin Luther King, Jr."



"All Are Welcome"



"Happy Birthday Martin Luther King"

National Braille Literacy Month

January recognizes and celebrates the importance of Braille Literacy. For individuals who are legally blind or visually impaired, Braille makes learning to read and write possible. Braille itself is not a language; however, most languages have a Braille system. Braille allows individuals to understand letters and numbers in a tactile way. The system is named after the inventor Louis Braille, who became blind after an accident. World Braille Day, celebrated annually on January 4, celebrates the life of Louis Braille and his creation of the Braille system.

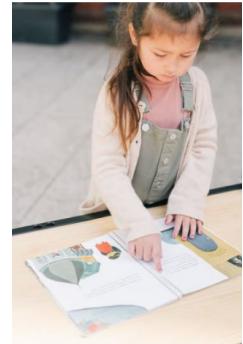
As a parent or caregiver, you may have wondered: "What if my child cannot see the toy in front of them or me across the room?," "How do I get services for my child?" or "How will visual impairment impact my child and my family?" If you are raising a child with a visual impairment, you are not alone. Family Connect, a website for parents of children with visual impairments, provides an online community for those who have visually impaired children and need local resources.

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The [Family Connect](#) website is a place for families to share stories and find support and answers to their questions. You might also use the helpful tips below for introducing Braille to children who are visually impaired. These tips could also be adapted for teaching sighted children about the Braille system.

Make It Fun: Show that Braille is enjoyable to learn and can be taught through play.



Make It Meaningful: Help children experience the entire process by giving them books written in Braille or a Braillewriter. Allow the child to use these and learn to put them away without assistance.

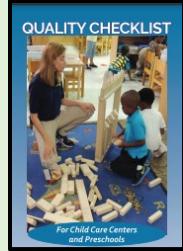
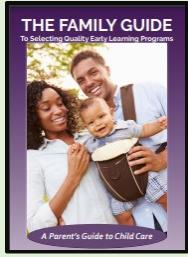
Make It Developmental: Allow the child to make their own choices of what to read and write. Provide the child with motivation to help keep their attention. When teaching a child Braille, introduce the Braille characters in the correct sequence.

Evaluating Child Care Programs

An early learning program will help your child learn new skills and develop socially. This decision is important, so it can seem difficult. When choosing a place for your child, look for a positive and caring relationship between teachers and children is key. Make sure that your child feels comfortable with the teacher. You should always visit a location more than once, for at least 30 minutes, and talk to staff and teachers before enrolling your child. Making this informed decision is made easier with the Division of Early Learning's (DEL) family and provider focused materials.

DEL materials include:

- Family Guide, available for [English](#), [Spanish](#) and [Haitian Creole](#).
- Quality Check List for Family Child Care Homes, available in [English](#), [Spanish](#) and [Haitian Creole](#).
- Quality Check List for Child Care Centers and Preschools, available in [English](#), [Spanish](#) and [Haitian Creole](#).
- Quality Check List for Summer Care, available in [English](#) and [Spanish](#).



Additionally, DEL encourages families to always review state licensing websites about the prospective provider, inspection reports provided by the Department of Children and Families' (DCF) Provider Search function or additional resources from DCF on their [MyFloridaMyFamily](#) Child Care website.

DCF offers the Florida Abuse Hotline. Reports to the hotline can be made anonymously, 24 hours a day and 7 days a week through their website or by calling 1-800-96-ABUSE (22873).

Remember, as you look at prospective providers for your child, always look and listen, ask questions, consider costs, and make informed decisions.

Make Everyday Moments of Generosity Count

The Florida Department of Education and the Division of Early Learning encourage you to share generous moments with your child. Early learners love to show kindness through play and their interactions with others. Parents want their children to know the value of giving to others and to feel good about giving. Generosity is a virtue you can teach your child at an early age.

At-Home Activities

Below are age-appropriate ways you can teach generosity to your child at home. Share pictures of you and your child showing generosity on social media using #DELGenerosityCounts22.



Age Group	At Home Activity
Birth-8 Months	<p>Talk about your own feelings and actions of empathy with your child. Supported by the Early Learning and Development Standards: <u>Social and Emotional Development Domain C. Building and Maintaining Relationships with Adults and Peers</u></p>
8-18 Months	<p>Let your child look in the mirror to play a game with you. Talk about your emotions such as happy, sad, angry and excited. Ask your child questions like “Is this a happy face?” or “Can you show me your happy face?” Supported by the Early Learning and Development Standards: <u>Social and Emotional Development Domain C. Building and Maintaining Relationships with Adult and Peers</u></p>
18-24 Months	<p>Talk to your child about their feelings at home. Read stories with your child. Ask your child questions like “Can you make a happy face?” or “Can you show me a silly face?” Making Faces: My First Book of Emotions, written by Abrams Appleseed. Supported by the Early Learning and Development Standards: <u>Social and Emotional Development Domain C. Building and Maintaining Relationships with Adults and Peers</u></p>
2-3 Years (24-36 Months)	<p>Encourage your child to share their toys with friends or family when playing together. Supported by the Early Learning and Development Standards: <u>Social and Emotional Development Domain C. Building and Maintaining Relationships with Adults and Peers</u></p>
3-4 Years (36-48 Months)	<p>Let your child play and interact with peers. Model empathy for your child through comforting words and actions. Ask your child, “How can you help a friend who is crying?” Supported by the Early Learning and Development Standards: <u>Social and Emotional Development Domain C. Building and Maintaining Relationships with Adults and Peers</u></p>

4 Years- Kindergarten (48 Months - 72months)	<p>Let your child play a game with you called “Face Off.” Make a face that expresses a feeling and ask your child to make a face that expresses the opposite feeling. Ask your child, “Do you remember faces other people made?” or “Can you name the different faces other people made?”</p> <p>Supported by the Early Learning and Development Standards:</p> <p><u>Social and Emotional Development Domain C. Building and Maintaining Relationships with Adults and Peers</u></p>
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Celebrate Literacy Week, Florida!

The annual [Celebrate Literacy Week, Florida!](#), an initiative of the [Just Read, Florida!](#) office, will be observed statewide on January 24-28, 2022. This week is designed to raise awareness about the importance of reading and to inspire students and families to make reading a part of their daily routine.

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, beginning at birth. Continue reading to your child as often as possible.

Early Literacy TIPS FOR FAMILIES

1

Talk with Your Child

Use trips to the grocery store, dinnertime chats, and driving in the car as a time to introduce new words and talk about the world around us.

2

Exchange Stories

Tell a great story, and have your child tell you one back! It's a great way to build oral language and learn new words.

3

Have Fun with Rhymes

Sing rhyming songs, read rhyming books, and say tongue twisters with your child. This helps them learn new sounds in words.

4

Talk About Letters

Help your child learn the names of the letters and the sounds the letters make. Turn it into a game! For example, you could say, “I’m thinking of a letter and it makes the sound sssssss.”

5

Keep Books Present

Your child will be more likely to pick up a book and read if they are out in the open and easy to find. Keep them readily available in the kitchen, car, and other locations where your child spends time.





Baby NAVIGATOR™

What every parent needs to know

Early communication sets the stage for talking, learning and success later in life. What you say and do with your child can make a difference because your baby's brain is developing at a fast rate. Baby Navigator is an app, developed through the Division of Early Learning's Preschool Development Grant, by the Florida State University's College of Medicine, Autism Institute. The app provides resources and tools for families to celebrate and support their baby's early learning. Starting at 2 months, Baby Navigator will help you celebrate your child's monthly milestones by inviting you to share new things your infant is learning and concerns you may have.

Your baby's first smiles, sounds, movements, gestures and words are important social communication milestones because they help your baby connect with you and the world around them. These milestones also predict the development of language, play and success in school.

When you join Baby Navigator, you will have access to resources and tools that are customized for your baby's age and change as your baby grows to help monitor and support your child's development. The earlier you join, the more resources you will have access to as your baby grows.

It is important to catch delays early when your baby's brain is developing quickly and being shaped by the experiences around them. Research shows that detecting social communication delays early, before your baby starts talking, makes a difference in your child's development.

Teaching your child how to communicate their feelings will help them learn how to tell you when they are not having a good day. For many children, delays in social communication are the first signs of a language delay. Some children with social communication delays are also at risk for other developmental delays, including autism.

The mission of Baby Navigator is to provide resources and tools for families to celebrate and support their baby's early learning and nurture the development of language and success in school and in life.

What is available on the Baby Navigator App?

- Learn the critical social communication skills to launch language learning, literacy and much more by 24 months using the 16x16 series.
- Catch small delays early to prevent bigger delays later.
- Learn about the early social communication milestones from video tutorials — select by age or by question.
- Explore video clips that show the milestones and how to support your child's learning in everyday activities.
- Chart your child's development to monitor which milestones they've reached and which ones to look for next.
- Download documents to help you learn the milestones and strategies to encourage the magic.
- Links to other websites with information for parents of infants and toddlers.



Florida's Voluntary Prekindergarten Education Program (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. Parents can choose from different educational settings and various program options. Private child care centers, public schools and specialized instructional service providers offer VPK. VPK providers have flexibility to structure daily hours per week to meet the required number of instructional hours.

- **VPK School-Year Program – (540 Instructional Hours):** Class sizes are up to 11 students with a single lead instructor or up to 20 students with a lead instructor and an assistant. Instructors have a minimum of a Florida Child Care Professional Credential.
- **VPK Summer Program – (300 Instructional Hours):** Classes have up to 12 students with a single lead instructor. Instructors must have a minimum of a bachelor's degree.
- **VPK Specialized Instructional Services Education Program (VPK SIS):** Takes place outside a traditional classroom setting and is designed for 4-year-olds with special needs who have current individual educational plans from local school districts. More information regarding VPK SIS is available at <http://www.floridaearlylearning.com/vpk/vpk-providers/specialized-instructional-services-providers>.

Registration for the 2022-2023 program year is now open. To register your child for VPK, visit the Family Portal at <https://familyservices.floridaearlylearning.com> to complete the sign-up process.

Upcoming Special Days in February

2 – Groundhog Day

2 – World Read Aloud Day

11 – National Make a Friend Day

14 – Valentine's Day

17 – Random Acts of Kindness Day

21 – Presidents' Day

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