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EARLY LEARNING PARENTS' PAGES

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE OFFICE OF EARLY LEARNING

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Jump into the Library

The public library is a place where stories, inspiration and imagination come alive. Library programs and resources encourage a love of reading and exploration, even at a young age. There are many benefits to families that engage with their local libraries.

- Public library programs encourage caregivers to participate in active reading with their children, fostering a positive association between children and literacy.
- Young children who are exposed to library programs show an increase in vocabulary and literacy skills by the time they start school.
- Many libraries help meet the needs of the entire family, like providing job-seeking assistance.

Even though many libraries have not yet resumed in-person programs due to social distancing limitations and other restrictions, activities and resources continue to be available. While offerings vary from library to library, you may find:

- Virtual story times for children, including songs and dancing.
- Take-home activity kits.
- Curbside book service.



Connect with your local library to find out what services and resources they are providing.

Guest Writer: Kaycee Shiley, Youth Services Consultant, Florida Division of Library and Information Services. For more information, please visit: <https://bit.ly/LibraryServicesFL>



National Eat Outside Day

Monday August 31st is National Eat Outside Day. This year plan a family picnic in your yard or at a local park. Over the last several months many family routines have been flipped upside down. Having a picnic style meal is certainly a fun way to change pace during this time.

Nutrelife has great tips and how-to's for kid friendly picnics. Each family member can help prepare for the picnic.

Ask young children to help pack towels or blankets to sit on and help pack the food for the picnic. Older children can join you in preparing the food. Don't forget to pack a refreshing drink to keep you and your family hydrated while spending time outside.



If you plan to extend your time outside be sure to pack snacks and skin protection such as bug spray and sunscreen. If the area you're going to has limited or no shade, be sure your family members wear hats and bring a portable umbrella.

Bring a few of your family's favorite outdoor games or toys like bubbles, sidewalk chalk or soccer balls.



Skills that Lead to Success

As your child prepares to return or begin attending a school or child care center, you may feel anxious. You may be worried about their reactions to a new caregiver or teacher or the children they will meet. Most parents wonder, "What skills will help my child succeed in this new setting and how can I support my child's learning at home?"

Teachers and child care providers tell parents the most important skills a child needs to have to be successful in school are social and emotional skills. Specifically, the executive functioning skills, also known as essential skills for life, make it much easier for children to succeed in school. The same skills help adults succeed in the workplace. These [skills](#) are the mental processes that help us plan, focus attention, remember instructions and juggle multiple tasks successfully. They enable positive behavior and good decision-making. They allow the brain to block out distractions, focus on important tasks and control impulses. Researchers at the Harvard Center for the Developing Child compare the brain to [a traffic control tower at a busy airport](#). It directs behaviors and decisions based on the environment and past experiences. These skills help the "traffic in our brains" to flow smoothly.

As adults, we use these skills to make healthy choices for our families and ourselves. Some researchers use the term Essential Skills for Life to describe them.



Ellen Gatlinsky, a researcher and the founder of the Mind in the Making Institute, offers families a list of children's books that are linked to these skills, the [7 Essential Skills for Life](#) as described in the book, *Mind in the Making*. These include [Focus and Self-control](#), [Perspective Taking](#), [Communicating](#), [Making Connections](#), [Critical Thinking](#), [Taking on Challenges](#) and [Self-directed, Engaged Learning](#). You can support your child in developing these skills by using activities and [books for specific ages](#) from the Mind in the Making website. These resources are available in English and Spanish. They are designed for infants and toddlers, preschoolers and school-age children. In addition, there are [Skill Building Opportunities](#) that change challenges for parents into opportunities to practice these skills. The Bezos Family Foundation offers families a free app, [Vroom](#), to help develop these skills as well.

The Florida Department of Education's Office of Early Learning (OEL) encourages families to practice these life skills with their children. OEL and the Bezos Family Foundation matched the Vroom tips to the Florida Early Learning and Developmental Standards. This makes it easy for families to use routines and activities that they do at home to help their children develop these important skills. These tips and the standards are located under the [Florida Early Learning and Developmental Standards](#) on OEL's website.

Tips for the First Day of School

Many families are concerned about schools and child care programs re-opening. You may be worried about the safety of your child if you are returning to your worksite and your child is returning to the child care program or school that they usually attend. For some parents, being at home with their child offered an opportunity to spend more time together, although working and caring for their child at the same time may have been challenging.



When the time comes for your child to return to child care or school, both of you may feel anxious and sad that you will be apart. This is known as [separation anxiety](#). You will need to be mindful of your own reactions and concerns since young children react to the emotions and stress they sense rather than the words they hear. Talk with your child about the way school may look when they return this year. There may be different rules in place or different ways the rooms are set up for health and safety purposes. If your family has experienced additional stress related to financial worries, sickness of immediate or extended family or just sheltering-in-place, you may need an extra dose of patience and sensitivity to make the transition go smoothly for your child.

Rebecca Parlakian, from [Zero to Three](#), offers [tips for families who are experiencing separation anxiety](#). She cautions that younger children may have a more difficult time adjusting to these changes because they may not have the language to express their feelings or may not understand your explanations about returning to child care or school. She recommends the following ways to overcome the separation anxiety that both you and your child may experience.

- Talk with the child care provider or your child's teacher to alert them to your child's anxiety. Ask about the safety and health measures that are in place to keep all of the children and adults healthy to make you less anxious about your child's safety.



- Use pretend play to act out the normal routines and activities that your child experiences at child care or school every day so they will feel more secure and familiar with the daily routines.
- Read your child books about starting school or feelings children have when they are scared or miss their parents. [The Kissing Hand](#) by Audrey Penn is an excellent book to read and follow up by talking with your child about their separation anxiety.
- When your child says they are scared or sad or that they feel sick, listen to your child. First, make sure that your child is not sick. Then, talk with them about their worries and explain that you may be having similar feelings. Then, tell them about a time you were anxious about something you had to do and what helped you feel better.
- Offer suggestions that may help your child feel more secure. Give them a picture of you to keep in their backpack or cubby so they can look at the picture when they feel sad or worried during the day. Give them a small item such as a “painted rock” that says I love you or a small toy clock with the pick-up time on it to remind them that you will be back to pick them up at the end of the day.
- Talk with your child’s teacher about ways you comfort your child at home. Using similar comfort methods at school will help babies and toddlers feel safer and be less stressful.
- Get back to your child’s usual routines such as bedtimes and waking times so your child will be rested and used to the routines when they start back to school or child care.



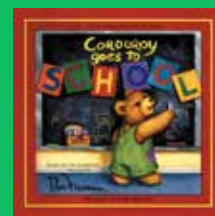
- Practice drop off routines before the first day back. There may be special health screenings in place at the school that you and your child will have to do. Explain these ahead of time.
- Make the drop off quick and don’t linger where your child can see you. Try to

sound happy and positive because your child will react to the tone of your voice and your facial expressions. If you feel that your child will need [extra support](#) on the first day, alert the child care provider or teacher and ask them to arrange for someone to meet your child at the drop off area on the first day. Child care providers are used to dealing with separation anxiety in young children, babies and toddlers and will probably have routines in place to assist parents at drop-off. It is important to remember to [take care of yourself](#) and your well-being in order to support your child’s emotions and fears. Keeping a positive outlook on life is important to you and your whole family. Start preparing your family now for a great start to the new school year!

Back to School Ideas

Check out the [Office of Early Learning’s Back to School page](#) for information and resources to make a smoother start for this school year.

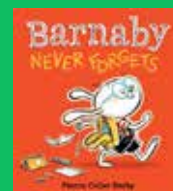
Whether it is first day jitters or the anxious feeling of returning to school, reading books can help ease any feelings your child may be having.



“Corduroy Goes to School”



“How to Get Your Teacher Ready”



“Barnaby Never Forgets”

For more suggestions:
<https://bit.ly/PreparingForSchool>



National Dog Day!



August 26th is [National Dog Day](#). Colleen Paige, author and behaviorist, proposed in 2004 to observe the importance of dogs and the impact they have on our daily lives. Also, this day recognizes the important work that service dogs do for so many.

Every family may [celebrate](#) this day differently. You can celebrate your family's dog by taking it outside to play or getting your dog a new toy. Volunteering at a local animal shelter and helping bathe or walk the dogs is another way to show appreciation. Some families may celebrate this day by becoming a [foster dog family or adoptive dog family](#).

Let your child help you make this fun family-friendly dog treat recipe from BarkandBiscuits.com to celebrate the dog in your life.

Ingredients:

- § 2 cups seedless watermelon pureed
- § 1/2 cup Plain Greek Yogurt
- § 1 tbsp. parsley chopped

Instructions:

- § Puree seedless watermelon in a blender.
- § Chop parsley.
- § Place mold on baking tray. If you are using the paw molds, first insert a small piece of parsley into the bottom then add a thin layer of plain Greek yogurt. Freeze for one hour. Next, fill the remaining mold with watermelon puree. Freeze overnight or at least 4 hours.
- § For the dog bone mold, add a piece of parsley to the bottom of mold and spoon in a layer of watermelon puree. Freeze one hour. Next, add a layer of plain Greek yogurt. Freeze one hour. Finally, add another layer of watermelon puree and freeze overnight or at least 4 hours.
- § Keep frozen until ready to serve.





Family Night



Gather the gang for Family Night, weekly family viewing events featuring movie specials or themed programming. Watch, play and learn with your favorite PBS KIDS characters every Friday from 7 to 9 pm and repeating on Saturday and Sunday evenings.

Watch Now on PBS KIDS! ▶

Hand Sanitizer Alert!

The Federal Drug Administration (FDA) has issued a warning to consumers and health care providers that there has been a sharp increase in [hand sanitizer products](#) that are labeled as containing ethanol (also known as ethyl alcohol), but that have tested positive for methanol contamination. Methanol, or wood alcohol, is a substance that can be toxic when absorbed through the skin or ingested and can be life-threatening when ingested.

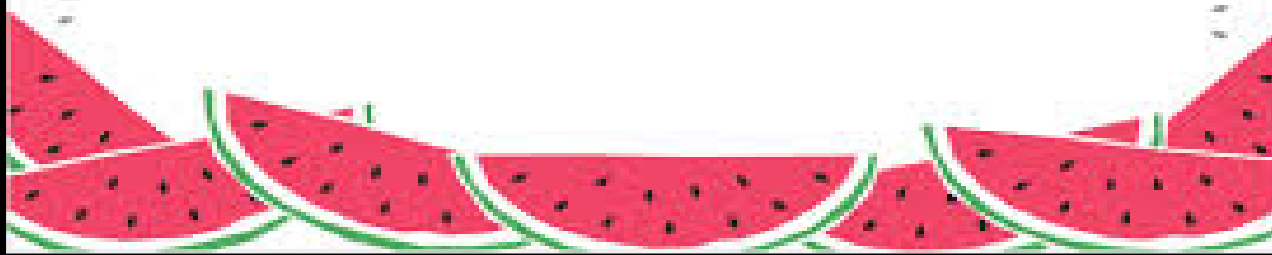


The agency has learned of adults and children ingesting hand sanitizer products contaminated with methanol that has led to recent adverse events including blindness, hospitalizations and death. Please check all hand sanitizers used by your family and in the schools or child care programs your child attends. Ask your child's teacher to make sure the hand sanitizers used by the children contain only ethanol and that all products are kept safely away from young children. There are [lists of dangerous sanitizers](#) on the FDA website.



August Special Dates:

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| 2 nd National Coloring Book Day | 3 rd National Watermelon Day |
| 9 th Book Lovers Day | 11 th – 13 th Perseid Meteor Shower |
| 12 th International Youth Day | 15 th Honey Bee Awareness Day |
| 26 th National Dog Day | 31 st National Eat Outside Day |



Richard Corcoran
Commissioner of Education
Shan Goff
Executive Director



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Early Learning
LEARN EARLY. LEARN FOR LIFE.

250 Marriott Drive
Tallahassee, FL 32399
Toll-Free 866-357-3239
www.FloridaEarlyLearning.com