

December 2021 – Vol. 7. Issue 12

Early Learning Parents' Pages

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE DIVISION OF EARLY LEARNING

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Safe Toys and Gifts Month



December is Safe Toys and Gifts Month. Throughout this special month, families often celebrate by sharing gifts with one another. As you consider gifts for young children this holiday season, be sure to choose age-appropriate toys that are designed to fit a child's specific physical, cognitive and social-emotional development. The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) has developed lists of suggested toy ideas for children that are safe and promote play based on your child's individual development.

Infants like to look at faces and bright colors. They are fascinated with sounds and like to touch objects with different textures. They use all their senses to examine everything in their environment. They like to listen to voices and enjoy you reading books to them, especially books that have rhymes and poems. Gift ideas for infants:

- Toys with faces, bright colors and toys that make different sounds such as rattles, soft dolls, large rings, squeeze toys and teething toys.
- Textured balls or similar toys they can hold, shake or reach out for.
- Recordings of lullabies and simple songs.

7- to 12-month-olds are on the move and enjoy toys they can hold and manipulate. They love to drop things in containers and empty them out over and over again. Soft toys they can climb on or over help them develop their large muscles. They enjoy toys that lead to pretend play with family and caregivers. Gift ideas for 7-to-12-month-olds:

- Small baby dolls, stuffed animals and puppets.
- Water toys to use while supervised in the bathtub.
- Wooden or plastic vehicles for pretend play.
- Large balls, push or pull toys.

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1-year-olds can walk, move quickly and climb stairs. They like to build or stack things. They are beginning to have better small motor control and like toys they can manipulate. They are interested in using crayons and paint and may begin to explore drawing or painting. Gift ideas for 1-year-olds:

- Wooden or cardboard blocks, boxes and puzzles.
- Toys with dials, switches, knobs and lids.
- Toy phones, toy steering wheels, small brooms and toy vacuums.

2-year-olds are learning lots of words and enjoy books and songs. They have better control of their hands and fingers and can play with smaller toys and manipulate smaller objects. They like toys that help develop their small and large muscles. Two-year-olds enjoy imitating adults and older children and love pretend play and creating art with paints and crayons. Gift ideas for 2-year-olds:

- Blocks or other stacking and building toys.
- Child-sized chairs, tables and kitchen sets.
- Dolls, dress-up clothes, puppets and stuffed animals.

3- to 5-year-olds have longer attention spans than toddlers, talk a lot and ask many questions. They like to experiment with new objects and use toys in various ways. They spend a lot of time in pretend play imitating family members, teachers, and characters they see in movies, on television or in books. They love toys that help develop their large muscles and help with small muscle control. Gift ideas for 3- to 5-year-olds:

- Puzzles, snap together blocks.
- Collections and other smaller objects to sort by length, width, height, shape, color, smell, quantity and other features—collections of plastic bottle caps, plastic bowls and lids, keys, shells, counting bears and small colored blocks.
- Costumes and dress-up clothes.
- Dolls with accessories.
- Puppets and small puppet stages.

Don't forget books! Beginning at birth, children should be read to daily. Check out Zero to Three's website to learn more about the importance of reading to your child. New books make wonderful gifts for young children. Look through the books, talk about the pictures and read to your child as often as possible.

Put a **FREEZE** on Winter Holiday Fires

Did you know?  **More than 1/3** of home decoration fires are started by candles.

As you deck the halls this season, be fire smart.  Keep candles at least **12 inches** away from anything that burns.

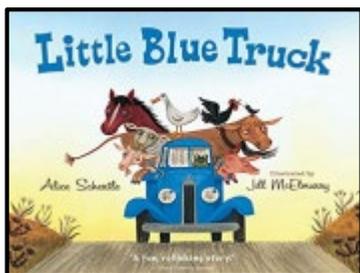
 Think about using **battery-operated** flameless candles.

 U.S. Fire Administration |  Fire is Everyone's Fight™ |  NFPA

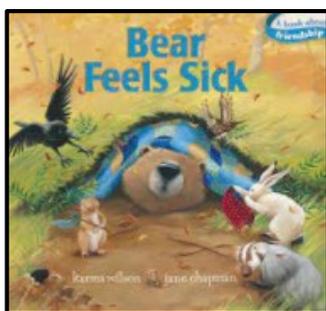
MyFloridaMyFamily



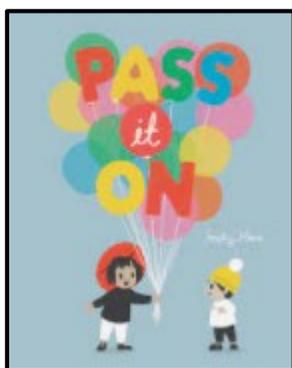
CELEBRATING “CARING AND HELPING OTHERS” BOOK LIST:



“Little Blue Truck”



“Bear Feels Sick”



“Pass It On”

To find more books on caring and helping others, visit Brightly or the [Division of Early Learning’s Preschool Booklist](#).

One way to help children experience a happy childhood and brighter future is reducing the number of families in crisis. The Florida Department of Children and Families has developed MyFloridaMyFamily, a web-based platform, focused on connecting families in need with local organizations ready to help. The goals of MyFloridaMyFamily are to pair Florida families with area resources that can strengthen and assist parents, increase adoptive and foster parent recruitment and engage community and faith-based organizations with supporting their communities.

To accomplish these goals, MyFloridaMyFamily teamed up with national partners to offer several advanced matchmaking features.

1. The online directory allows families to search for organizations by zip code for assistance with housing, financial assistance, childcare, healthcare, legal aid and more. Just visit MyFloridaMyFamily.com and select “I Need Help.”
2. The Care Portal connects children with needs to community groups ready to help. Care Portal notifies local groups of this family, giving the organization an opportunity to respond in real-time.
3. Angel Armies is for interested faith institutes that want to connect with national non-profits to strengthen their own congregations and communities. Faith institutions can receive family advocacy training, ministry tools and more.

Through MyFloridaMyFamily and its other partners, Aunt Bertha, Care Portal and Angel Armies, Florida has been able to build a network of people and organizations that are ready to help families in need and make sure every child has a happy, safe and bright future.



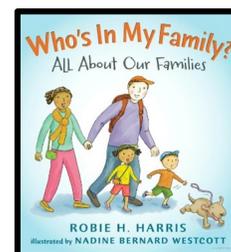
Supporting Social Studies for Young Learners

The [Florida Early Learning and Developmental Standards](#), available for children birth up to kindergarten, will help you understand the developmental milestones achieved by your child. There are eight domains, Physical Development, Approaches to Learning, Social and Emotional Development, Language and Literacy, Mathematical Thinking, Scientific Inquiry, Creative Expression through the Arts and Social Studies. In the earliest years, social studies concepts simply involve children exploring their world and trying to make sense of the social and physical environments. Social interactions form the basis of social studies, therefore in the early childhood development, each child’s basic social understanding begins with self and family then expands to early learning. A sensitive, respectful approach sets the tone for a child’s social learning. Below is an at-a-glance into the Social Studies standards for birth to kindergarten on individuals and groups and what families can do to support their child’s learning.

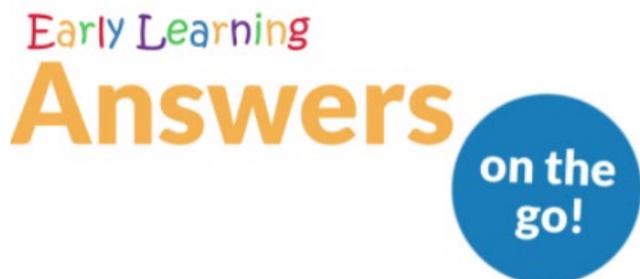
Domain: Social Studies		
Standard: C: Individuals and Groups		
Age:	Standard:	What families can do to support their child’s learning:
Birth-8 Months	Begins to recognize family members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foster positive relationships with their baby. • Understand that they are the child’s first and most important teacher. • Talk to child, sing songs, play finger games.
8-18 Months	Identifies family members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create and use a family picture book when talking with children. • Create special moments while getting ready in the morning, such as snuggle time, reading a book or talking/singing to child while changing diapers or getting dressed.
18-24 Months	Begins to recognize self as separate from others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide opportunities for children to interact with peers in the playground or park. • Start a collection of photos depicting what children do in various settings, such as home, school or park.
2-3 Years	Recognizes self as separate from others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage children in conversations about what they enjoy doing best. • Understand children are experiencing many feelings of their own and need help expressing themselves. • Be good role models as children begin to copy words and actions they hear and see.
3-4 Years	Identifies self and others as part of a group Identifies groups within a community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide children with opportunities to work and play in a variety of settings such as playground and birthday parties. • Talk with children about who they played with at school and ask them to describe the activity. • Ask children if they would like to invite one or two of their classmates to visit. • Discuss different groups of which child/family may be a part (e.g., extended family, military community, religious organization, circle of friends). • Expose child to jobs that help the community (e.g., fire fighters, medical helpers, sanitation workers).

4 Years- Kindergarten	<p>Identifies differences and similarities of self and others as part of a group</p> <p>Explains the role of groups within a community</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Model for children how to treat people as individuals. • Offer observations on specific attributes without labeling one as better than another. • Explain to children that differences make us unique. Some friends wear glasses, move using a wheelchair, are different sizes and skin color and wear different clothing. There are also many ways we are the same. Give examples. • Point out different community workers when out running errands or taking a walk and discuss their jobs and responsibilities (e.g., people who are driving trash and recycling trucks, fixing cars at a garage, working at doctor’s offices or police and fire stations). • Check out fiction or non-fiction books at the library that describe different types of community workers and discuss how their job is important to the child’s community. • When at the park or playground, act out different roles of community workers with children. Use different objects found nearby and your child’s imagination as props.
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This month, set a time as a family to listen to a read aloud of the book *“Who’s in My Family”* by Robie H. Harris. This time of year, many families will gather together, and these moments are a wonderful time to allow your child to explore social interactions. While you read the book, you will join Nellie and Gus and their family, plus all manner of other families, for a day at the zoo, where they see animal families galore! To top off their day, Nellie and Gus invite friends and relatives for a fun dinner at home. This engaging story interweaves conversations between the siblings and a matter-of-fact text, making it clear to every child that whoever makes up your family, it is perfectly normal, and very wonderful. December 27 is Visit the Zoo Day. Search for a zoo near you for your family to visit and see animal families.



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 such as:



- What is an Individualized Family Service Plan or IFSP, an Individual Educational Plan or IEP, and a 504 Plan?
- What is a Child Developmental Screening?
- What is School Readiness and Voluntary Prekindergarten?
- How do I identify a quality program for my child?

Videos are available in English and Spanish. Check them out at <http://www.floridaearlylearning.com/family-resources/answers>.

Baby Crying? There's an APP for that!

The *Period of PURPLE Crying* mobile app found in the Apple App and Google Play stores is intended for parents of newborns. The *Period of PURPLE Crying* is a new way to help parents understand this time in their baby's life, which is a normal part of every infant's development.

Hearing that your baby "has colic" can be scary and confusing. The fact is your baby is going through a normal developmental phase. This time is referred as the *Period of Purple Crying*. Please know that this is not because the baby turns purple while crying. The acronym is a meaningful and memorable way to describe what parents and their babies are going through. *PURPLE* stands for Peak of crying, Unpredictability, Resists soothing, Pain-like face, Long lasting and Evening.

The *Period of PURPLE Crying* begins at about 2 weeks of age and continues until about 3-4 months of age. There are other common characteristics of this phase, or period, which are better described by the acronym *PURPLE*. All babies go through this period. It is during this time that some babies can cry a lot and some far less, but they all go through it.

Many parents and caregivers ask what they can do to try to soothe their crying infant. The following is a list of practical things to try to calm your crying baby. It is important to remember that while many of these suggestions will work most of the time, nothing will work all of the time.

10 Tips to Soothe Your Crying Infant:

1. **Feed your baby.** Hunger is the main reason a baby will cry.
2. **Burp your baby.** Babies do not have a natural ability to get rid of air built up in their stomach.
3. **Give your baby a lukewarm bath.** A great soothing technique but never leave your baby unintended.
4. **Massage your baby.** A gentle massage on a baby's back, arms or legs can be very comforting.
5. **Make eye contact with your baby and smile.** Eye-to-eye contact with your baby when they are crying can distract and comfort them.
6. **Kiss your baby.** This can help lessen the tension during fierce crying episodes.
7. **Sing softly.** Lullabies were created because of their effectiveness at calming crying babies.
8. **Hum in a low tone against your baby's head.** Babies love the sounds of music.
9. **Run a vacuum cleaner.** The noise from a vacuum produces a masking sound referred to as white noise. Babies find this noise hypnotizing.
10. **Take your baby for a ride in the car.** The vibrations from the car have a sleep-inducing effect on babies. Always make sure your baby is secure in a rear-facing car seat in the back seat.



It is completely normal to become overwhelmed with a baby's crying. If you feel yourself getting to a point of frustration, call the Child Help Hotline.

Child Help is a 24/7 toll free number that you can call and talk to a professionally trained counselor and get help handling your infant's crying as well as other challenging developmental topics. Child Help National Hotline: 1-800-4-A-CHILD (1-800-422-4453) or Florida's Hotline at 1-800-962-2873. For more information on *The Period of Purple Crying*, visit purplecrying.info.



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 not to exceed 11 students with a single lead instructor or up to 20 students with a lead instructor and an assistant. Instructors must have a minimum of a Florida Child Care Professional Credential.
- **VPK Summer Program - 300 Instructional Hours:** Classes are not to exceed 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):** Instruction takes place outside of a traditional classroom setting and is designed for 4-year-olds with special needs who have current individualized educational plans from local school districts. More information regarding VPK SIS is available at <https://bit.ly/3kwHWO6>.

Parents may also contact their [local early learning coalition](#) for additional information and assistance.

December Special Dates:

November 28 – December 6 - Hanukkah

3rd – International Day of Persons with Disabilities

4th – National Cookie Day

21st – First Day of Winter

25th – Christmas Day

26th – First Day of Kwanzaa

27th – Visit the Zoo Day

31st – New Year's Eve

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