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Early Learning Parents' Pages

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE DIVISION OF EARLY LEARNING

Parents: Take Steps to Learn About the Florida Assessment for Student Thinking

Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) providers use the coordinated screening and progress monitoring system, a statewide standardized program known as the Florida Assessment of Student Thinking (FAST) Star Early Literacy, to evaluate students' early literacy and math skills. As a parent and as your child's first teacher, your involvement in your child's learning is vital to their academic success. Below is a Q&A on FAST Star Early Literacy to help you better understand progress monitoring and how to support your child's progress.

What is FAST Star Early Literacy?

FAST Star Early Literacy is a short screening and progress monitoring tool to gauge your child's academic growth in early literacy and math. Your child's teacher will use the progress monitoring results to determine which students may need additional academic support.

How often are VPK programs required to administer FAST Star Early Literacy?

VPK providers are required to administer FAST Star Early Literacy at least three times during the program year. This frequency helps monitor your child's progress and determine instructional focus based on your child's needs.

How can you support your child to do their best on FAST Star Early Literacy?

On the day of progress monitoring, which your provider should advise you of, ensure your child gets a good night's rest and a healthy breakfast and that they arrive at school on time and unrushed. Communicate with your child's teacher after each progress monitoring session to find out what steps they may plan to take to support your child's learning as well as what suggestions they have to help you support your child's learning at home.

How do you communicate with your child's teacher?

After your child completes a progress monitoring session, it is helpful for parents to review their child's results with the VPK teacher and ask questions during a parent/teacher conference. Schedule a parent/teacher conference to talk with the teacher to find out how you can help support your child with specific skills at home. During the meeting, the VPK teacher may provide a copy of the [Parent Report](#) to review your child's progress monitoring results. As you review the report with the teacher, you may have questions you would like to ask, or you may ask the questions below.

- How can I help my child with specific skills at home?
- What is one skill in reading and math I can help my child work on at home?
- How can I support the lessons taught in the classroom?

The Division of Early Learning's [Prekindergarten Family Guide](#) is a resource to help you prepare your child for kindergarten and a successful future.

Where can you go for additional questions?

To learn more about FAST Star Early Literacy, families are encouraged to read the [Family Guide to Star Assessments](#) (PDF) for more information.



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Head Start and School Readiness

What is the difference?

Both Florida's School Readiness (SR) program and Head Start (HS) serve income-eligible families and encourage parent engagement, but they differ when it comes to eligibility and services.

SR serves children birth to age 13 of parents who are working or participating in an educational program while their children receive child care and learn skills to help them succeed in school.

HS serves families with children ages 3 to 5 and includes Early Head Start (EHS), which serves families with children under the age of 3 and expectant mothers. Services include early learning and development, health and nutrition and family well-being.

SR enrolls up to 150 percent of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) while HS enrolls up to 100 percent of FPL. Both SR and HS prioritize the enrollment of children experiencing homelessness and children in foster care.

Learn more about the HS program at [Head Start & Early Head Start](#) and SR at [What is School Readiness \(SR\)?](#)

Celebrate Black History Month

Black History Month is celebrated in February in honor of the achievements and contributions of African Americans. One idea for an at-home learning activity that parents can do to celebrate with their children is to honor Garrett Augustus Morgan Sr., an African American inventor who created the three-way traffic light.

Mr. Morgan was always dreaming of new ideas; he obtained a patent for his sewing machine and opened his own successful sewing machine repair business. He also invented a breathing device or "safety hood" providing protection from toxic fumes when worn.

You can share his inspirational story and engage your young child in a physical development activity by playing the "Red Light Green Light" game together or with friends.



Questions About Child Care? The Child Care Resource and Referral Network Can Help

Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) is a statewide program that provides free resources and support to families with questions about child care and child care providers. The Division of Early Learning's CCR&R State Network partners with 30 early learning coalitions (ELC) that provide CCR&R services at the local level.

CCR&R specialists at your local ELC can:

- Assist families with locating quality child care and early learning programs.
- Provide referrals to community resources and programs, customized child care listings and information on financial assistance options for child care.
- Assist current and prospective providers with information, resources and tips to improve the quality of their programs through family engagement activities.

See below on when to contact your [Early Learning Coalition](#) or call the state network at **1-866-357-3239**.

Early Learning Coalition's CCR&R Organization

- Check status of an application.
- Report changes in household information for your SR application.
- Get customized child care listings and community resources that meet your needs.
- Request an SR or VPK provider or county transfer.
- Get information on locally funded initiatives/programs.

CCR&R State Network

- Ask general questions about federal and state funded early learning programs.
- Reset the password for your family portal account if you are locked out of your account.
- Request assistance connecting with your local ELC.
- Report challenges accessing early learning programs.