

✦ The Exceptional Express ✦

Florida Diagnostics & Learning Resource System (FDLRS)
Panhandle Area Educational Consortium (PAEC)

QUARTERLY

FDLRS PAEC

NEWSLETTER

Helping Children with Disabilities Learn, Grow, and Thrive Through Nature



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INSIDE:

Creative ways to beat



- Family Engagement = Student Success
- Summer Reading Matters
- Learning Through Play is Real Learning
- Summer is the Perfect Time
- Technology Works Best When Families Participate

* Taking Learning Outside the Box *

Simple play activities encourage children to explore, create, and discover while developing the skills needed for learning, communication, coordination, creativity, and problem-solving. Whether it's scavenger hunts through nature, floating down the river, backyard science experiments, geocaching, or garden projects, summer offers countless opportunities for children to stay curious, engaged, and learning.

Nature: Florida's Largest Classroom

You don't need a textbook to help your child learn. Florida's natural spaces—from local parks and springs to backyards and nature trails—offer countless opportunities to build important life skills. Exploring nature helps children practice observation, problem-solving, communication, responsibility, and curiosity. Whether they're identifying plants, tracking wildlife, helping in a garden, or simply asking questions about the world around them, children are developing skills that support learning both in and out of the classroom. This summer, take advantage of Florida's largest classroom and discover how everyday outdoor adventures can become meaningful learning experiences.



IDEA

Using natural materials to draw or paint

Did you know?

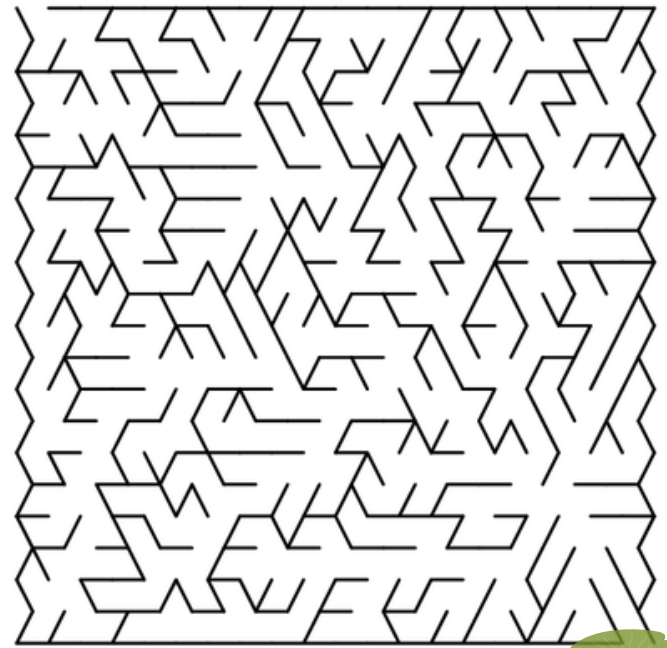


**Family Engagement
equals
Student Success**

Better Together



**Can you help Mr. Toad find
his way to the lily pad?**



Small Moments

Research consistently shows that when families are involved in literacy activities and school learning, children develop more positive attitudes toward reading and stronger academic outcomes. Family involvement helps children view learning as important and enjoyable.



Big Impacts

dough play activities



fine motor skills
cognitive development
problem-solving
body awareness
coordination
sensory processing
language and literacy

finger painting



sensory exploration
fine motor skills
creative thinking
imaginative play
emotional expression
cognitive development
visual perception

building projects



spatial awareness
planning skills
motor development
problem-solving
logical reasoning
resilience
creative thinking

puzzle games



problem-solving
critical thinking
spatial awareness
memory skills
concentration
comparing/contrasting
persistence/patience
pattern recognition

Learning Through Play

JUST READING FAMILIES!

READING BEGINS AT HOME.

Strong parental involvement is a key component of the Just Read, Florida! initiative. In addition to helping your children to grow up happy and healthy, one of the most important things families can do for them is help them develop their reading skills.



Key Research Finding

Research continues to show that students who engage in reading during the summer are more likely to maintain or improve reading skills, while extended periods without reading can contribute to skill loss. Recent reviews emphasize that successful summer reading programs combine access to books, motivation, and family involvement. Even a few minutes of shared reading each day can make a meaningful difference in a child's literacy development and long-term success as a reader.



For At Home Ideas Go To:

<https://improvingliteracy.org/resource/supporting-your-child-s-literacy-at-home>



JUST READING FAMILIES!

BABIES

Read to your baby for short periods several times a day. As you read, point out things in the pictures. Name them as you point to them. Cardboard or cloth books with large simple pictures of things with which babies are familiar are the best books to begin with.

AGES 1-4

Talk with your child as you read together. Point to pictures and name what is in them. When your child is ready, ask him or her to do the same. Ask your child about his or her favorite parts of the story, and answer your child's questions about events or characters. Wherever you are with your child, point out individual letters in signs, billboards, posters and books. When your child is 3 to 4 years old, ask him or her to begin finding and naming some letters.

KINDERGARTEN

Read predictable books to your child. Teach him or her to hear and say repeating words, such as names for colors, numbers, letters, and animals. Predictable books help children to understand how stories progress. A child easily learns familiar phrases and repeats them, pretending to read. Practice the sounds of language by reading books with rhymes and playing simple word games (i.e., How many words can you make up that sound like the word "bat"?).

FIRST GRADE

Point out the letter-sound relationships your child is learning on labels, boxes, newspapers and magazines. Listen to your child read words and books from school. Be patient and listen as your child practices. Let him or her know you are proud of their reading.

SECOND & THIRD GRADE

Build reading accuracy by having your child read aloud and point out words he or she missed and help him or her read words correctly. If you stop to focus on a word, have your child reread the whole sentence to be sure he or she understands the meaning.

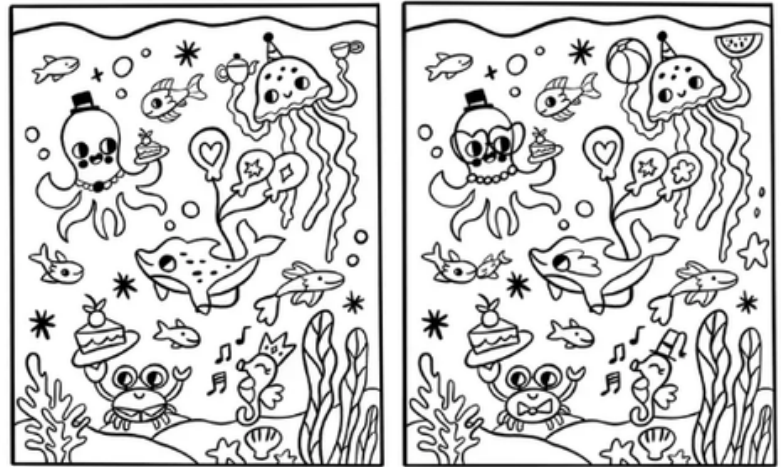
*Taken from the U.S. Department of Education "Helping Your Child Become A Reader" and The Partnership for Reading "Put Reading First" publications.



Top 10 Screen Time Dos & Don'ts**Helping Children with Disabilities Build Healthy Digital Habits**
DO...

Research-Based Tips for Families

1. **Choose quality over quantity.** Select educational, communication, and creative apps instead of passive entertainment.
2. **Create consistent screen-time routines.** Predictable schedules help children move more smoothly between tasks and adjust more easily to different activities.
3. **Participate with your child.** Watch, play, and talk together to build language, thinking, and social skills.
4. **Encourage regular movement breaks.** Aim for a break every 30-60 minutes to support focus, attention, and overall health.
5. **Use accessibility features.** Explore tools like text-to-speech, closed captions, speech-to-text, and magnification to increase independence.

SPOT 10 DIFFERENCES


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DON'T...

1. **Don't treat all screen time the same.** Educational and assistive technology serves a different purpose than entertainment.
2. **Don't use screens as the only way to calm difficult behaviors.** Teach additional coping strategies like movement, sensory breaks, or deep breathing.
3. **Don't allow unrestricted or unsupervised screen use.** Stay involved and know what your child is watching, playing, or communicating.
4. **Don't let screens replace sleep, physical activity, or family interaction.** Healthy development depends on balancing technology with real-world experiences.
5. **Don't compare your child to others.** Every child has unique needs. Work with your child's teachers and therapists to find the right balance for your family.

**CHECK US OUT!**

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Remember...**The best screen time is purposeful screen time.**

Research Sources: American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), HealthyChildren.org, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and Mayo Clinic.

CHECK THIS OUT**AMC sensory-friendly theater****they turn the lights up and the volume down**