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Back to School with the Right Tips and Tools!



With school starting in just a few weeks, parents are looking for ways to get their children ready for the new school year. All from immunization forms and physicals to tax-free weekend (August 12-14), this issue of Parent Link will get you set and ready to go!

Early Literacy: Continuing a Reading Routine During the School Year

By: Bethany Sands, Director of Inclusion

Just because school is starting doesn't mean you should stop any new reading habits you and your child began during the summer. Keeping the same reading routine may not be easy once school starts, so aim for 3 to 4 days a week. Make reading with your child a priority. Have a designated time for reading, such as at bedtime or before or after a nap. Allow your child to choose the book. Know that children who are really interested, engaged and learning will choose the same book over and over. Keep reading that book. It's a sign of success!

It's never too early to start promoting language development and literacy skills, even if your child is an infant. So what else can you do?

-Read every day if possible.

-Reading for only a few minutes is OK. Don't worry if you don't finish the book. Young children have short attention spans that will grow longer with age and practice.

-Talk or sing about the pictures. You don't have to read the words to "read" the book.

-Show the cover of the book and explain what the book is about. Then show the words by running your finger along left to right if you are reading the words.



[Miami-Dade Public Library System](#)

[Miami-Dade County Public Schools](#)

[The Parent Academy](#)



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-Have fun with the book: Let your child turn or help turn the pages. Create different voices for the characters or animals in the story.

-Make it personal by relating the pictures or story to your own family, pets or family events.

-Let your child tell the story. It doesn't have to be perfect or detailed, just the main ideas. Getting the details or sequence of events will come; that's why reading the same book many times is so beneficial.

-Ask questions and let children ask questions. Let these questions help engage children in conversation, talk about other familiar activities and give meaning and understanding to the story.

-Laughing and being silly or mimicking what is happening makes reading and sharing books memorable.

Have FUN reading with your child!

Next month this column will give you great open-ended questions to encourage interactions and help guide your child's comprehension. For more information, please visit www.zerotothree.org/BrainWonders.

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA): Parent Resources

The [Miami-Dade County Public Schools](#) offers a great parent resource guide for parents of students with disabilities. According to the guide, a parent is an important member of the Individual Educational Plan (IEP) Team, which builds the framework for your child's education. Below are two of the six resources the guide offers.

Family Network on Disabilities of Florida, Inc.

Parent Education Network (PEN) Project

Contact persons:

Ms. Margarita Montalvo: 305-378-1336

Ms. Myriam Orta: 786-715-3395

Website: www.fndfl.org

Assistance in:

-Individual assistance on educational issues

-Workshops in English, Spanish and Creole

-Understanding the IEP process, IDEA and other topics related to students with special needs



Parent to Parent of Miami, Inc.
Community Parent Resource Center
7990 SW 117 Ave., Suite 200
Miami, FL 33183
Telephone: 305-271-9797
Fax: 305-271-6628
Website: www.ptopmiami.org

Assistance in:

-Individual peer support, assistance, and counseling on special education issues provided by Education and Support Specialists in English, Spanish, and Creole

-Parent skill building workshops in English, Spanish and Creole

-Information and guidance regarding your child's disability
For a copy of the complete guide, in English, Spanish or Creole, visit <http://forms.dadeschools.net/webpdf/6334.pdf>.

Reference:

Miami-Dade County Public Schools: <http://www.dadeschools.net/>

Countdown to a New School Year: Easing School Anxieties

Young children, especially those starting school for the first time, experience first day jitters. Preparing for the first week of school may not help your child's anxieties towards it, but it will help build a better relationship between you and your child. Here are some simple tips from [PBS Parents](#), "Starting School: Before School Starts," to make the first week a lot easier.

Practice going to school.

Help your child get familiar with the route and routine. Point out interesting sights or places familiar to your child.

Describe the first day of school.

Keep in mind that a child starting school for the first time or going to a new school may have a hard time imagining what it will be like. You've been to school before, but they haven't. "Talking about the basic sequence of the day will help your child make a mental movie of what to expect. Kids form pictures in their minds, and reviewing the process in detail will make things more familiar and less scary on the first day of school," advises Diane Levin, Ph.D., Professor of Education at Wheelock College.

Start going to bed earlier.

One or two weeks before school begins, start rolling bedtime back to a school schedule. Begin slowly by waking your child 15 minutes earlier and going to bed 15 minutes earlier each night.



Give children control over what they can control.

Offering simple choices may help calm your child's nerves and get them excited. If you pick out a new backpack or lunchbox, let your child choose the color.

Plan ahead how you will say goodbye.

Think about what your child needs in a goodbye. What will be most helpful, a quick goodbye, or five minutes of cuddle time with you?

Read books about starting school. (Our favorite!)

Whether they're going to start at a new school or a new grade, books about it will get kids talking and feeling comfortable.

Some good ones include:

- "The Berenstain Bears Go to School" by Stan and Jan Berenstain
- "Annabelle Swift, Kindergartner" by Amy Schwartz
- "First Day Jitters" by Julie Dannenberg
- "I Am Absolutely Too Small for School" by Lauren Child

Interested in reading the whole article or getting more ideas and tips on how to have a great first week of school? Visit PBS Parents, Going to School at <http://www.pbs.org/parents/goingtoschool/>.

Reference:

PBS Parents: <http://www.pbs.org/parents/goingtoschool/>

The Parent Academy: Helping Your Child Succeed in School

Being the first person your child interacts with during his or her first years of life, parents are the first and most important teacher. [The Parent Academy](#), which offers a variety of parenting classes, assistances and resources, has released a guide for parents with tips on how to help your child succeed in school by being their first teachers. Below are just a few of their tips. For the full version of the guide, visit

http://theparentacademy.dadeschools.net/pdf/Child_Succeed.pdf

Early Childhood

-Your child is going through a critical learning stage from birth to age 5. There is so much that parents can do during this time to help their children develop school readiness skills.

-Nurturing and showing your child love is necessary for normal growth and development, so give them hugs and kisses frequently!

-It is important that parents and other caregivers talk with children, even infants, as often as possible. Developing language skills, such as oral language, helps your child develop pre-literacy skills.

-Positive discipline is also important. When a child does something that is not acceptable, please take the time to explain to him or her what was wrong, and talk about how you expect him or her to act.

School Age

-Talk to your child about what they are learning in school. Schedule at least one family mealtime together each day.

-Set up a special quiet space in your home for your child to complete homework. Review your child's homework together.

-Monitor your child's attendance. Visit your school's attendance office and make sure that you are aware of the days that your child is reported as absent from school.

-Become involved! Attend open houses, activities, parent conferences and join the PTSA(Parent-Teacher-Student Association).

Reference:

The Parent Academy:

<http://theparentacademy.dadeschools.net/index.htm>



Special Immunization Program Offers Free Back-to-School Immunizations

The Special Immunizations Program, offered by the Miami-Dade County Health Department, will provide free Back-to-School immunization to children between 2 months and 18 years of age. Parents must bring their child's immunization record and a picture identification. Please visit one of the following locations, or call 786-845-0550 for more information:

Little Haiti Health Center

300 NE 80 Terrace

Miami, FL 33137

Monday, Wednesday, Friday, from 8:00 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.

Jefferson Reaves

1009 NW 5 Ave.

Miami, FL 33136

Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday, from 8:00 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.

Wednesday from 10:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

West Perrine Health Center

18255 Homestead Avenue

Miami, FL 33157

Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.



Downtown Clinic

1350 NW 14 St.

Miami, FL 33125

Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.

Information provided by the Alliance for Early Care & Education.

Ask Dr. Hughes

Do you have questions for our resident expert in child development? Ask Dr. Hughes!

Each month Parent Link, research and evaluation analyst Christine Hughes, Ph.D., will answer your questions about child development. Topics can cover language, social skills, play, behavior, motor skills, and thinking and learning from ages birth to 5-years-old. Dr. Hughes earned her B.A. in psychology from the University of Miami, where she currently teaches part-time. Her research has focused on the development of at-risk infants and children in early intervention. Please email your questions to info@elcmdm.org with "Ask Dr. Hughes"

in the subject line. Also, include the location of your residence in Miami-Dade and/or Monroe County (e.g., Coconut Grove, Kendall, Key West).

Please note that questions may be edited, and not every question received will be answered in the newsletter. To protect the privacy of individuals and maintain confidentiality, names will not be printed, but we may refer to individuals by area (for example, "A mother in Miami Beach asked..."). The information provided in this column released by the Early Learning Coalition of Miami-Dade/Monroe courtesy of Dr. Hughes is not intended to be used as psychological or medical advice, diagnosis, treatment, or as any other professional mental health or medical service. As laws, details and personal situations vary from person to person and state to state, articles and content contained in the newsletter are not and cannot be used as substitute for legal, parental, health, mental health, or any other advice.

The column is not intended to be a solicitation of business or the furnishing of self-help advice. Readers are strongly urged to consult independent and qualified professionals before making any decisions. The views expressed are those of the writer and not necessarily of the ELC.

ELC and You - Community Resources to Know

We understand that with budget reductions across the state, and in many companies and organizations, you may need assistance in different household areas to make ends meet. Below is a list of community resources that may be handy in tough times.

Child Care Resource & Referral (CCR&R)

One valuable resource that families may turn to for assistance with their child care needs is Child Care Resource & Referral (CCR&R), a free service that specializes in helping families find high-quality and affordable child care in their respective area. In partnership with Miami-Dade County's Child Development Services (CDS), our local CCR&R maintains a database of all legally operating child care providers in Miami-Dade County. A CCR&R specialist will be able to generate a customized list of referrals that provides a summary of each provider's hours of care, location, environment, enhancements, rates and fees, ages of children served, etc. These referrals may also include providers that offer after-school care, summer care, sibling discounts, hardship discounts, reduced rates, scholarships and negotiated rates.

CCR&R can also share creative financial assistance options and information about local early learning programs and community resources that may help meet a family's financial needs. To contact a CCR&R specialist for assistance, please call 305-373-3521.

Search for Employment

[Employ Florida](#) provides contact information to all of Florida's quality workforce resources and services that can help families find employment and job training opportunities in their respective local area. Please contact Employ Florida at 866-352-2345.

Collecting Unemployment

Please contact the Unemployment Compensation Benefits hotline at 1-800-208-2418, or via their website at www.fluidnow.com.

Children's Low-Cost Health Insurance

To inquire if your children qualify for this benefit, please contact Florida KidCare at 1-888-540-5437, or visit their website at www.floridakidcare.org.

Discount Internet Service

A program launched in partnership with Comcast cable provider which guarantees the price of \$9.95 a month (plus taxes) for high-speed Internet service from Comcast, with no activation or equipment charges. As part of the eligibility, the family must have a child who receives a free lunch in the National School Program and lives within Comcast's service area. For more details and information on this upcoming service please read the Miami Herald article at <http://www.miamiherald.com/2011/08/02/v-fullstory/2342521/needy-families-offered-cheap-internet.html>.

Community Resources

Please call 3-1-1 for questions or concerns related to housing assistance or community resources. 311 is a national information and referral service that provides information and referrals to local human services such as crisis intervention services, housing, food stamps, support groups, financial assistance and more.

Local Events for the Whole Family!

Florida's Tax Free Weekend

When: August 12-14

Perfect for parents who need to pick up school supplies, clothing, shoes, and other back-to-school shopping items. Florida's Tax Free Weekend applies to: books, clothing, and footwear (\$75 or less) and school supplies (\$15 or less).

Back-to-School Fair

The event will be free to attend and open to the general public. Health screening, education, book bags, and school supplies, etc.

When: Saturday, August 13

Time: 10:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.

Where: Miami-Dade College North Campus
11380 N.W. 27 Ave., Building #4
Miami, FL 33167

Cost: FREE

Back-To-School Safari

Indoor education fair and outdoor fun! Free health screenings and immunizations, school supplies and much more!

When: Sunday, August 14

Time: 2:00 p.m. - 6:00 p.m.

Where: Jungle Island
1111 Parrot Jungle Trail
Miami, FL 33132

Cost: FREE Admission; \$4 parking fee per car.

For more information, visit the The Parent Academy website at www.theparentacademy.com.

Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden Free Sundays in August
Enjoy the wonder of Fairchild, every Sunday in August and the first
Wednesday of every month from June to November, for free.

When: Sundays, August 14, 21 and 28

Time: 9:30 a.m.- 4:30 p.m.

Where: Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden
10901 Old Cutler Road
Coral Gables, FL 33156

Cost: FREE

For more information, call 305-667-1651, or visit
www.fairchildgarden.org.

Parent Space

The Early Learning Coalition of Miami-Dade/Monroe would like you, our parents, to have an area in the *Parent Link* newsletter that you can call your own. This space will provide advice, tips, jokes, stories, and/or even job opportunities that other local parents wish to share. So don't be shy; send us something you would like to share at info@elcmdm.org. Please note that included submissions may be edited for clarity, etc. We look forward to hearing from you.

About the Early Learning Coalition of Miami-Dade/Monroe

The Early Learning Coalition of Miami-Dade/Monroe is a nonprofit organization dedicated to ensuring high-quality early care and education for children in Miami-Dade and Monroe counties. Through a variety of affordable and innovative early education and voluntary pre-kindergarten programs, the Coalition serves more than 50,000 children ages birth to 12-years-old and their families.

Founded in 2000, the Early Learning Coalition is among 31 similar organizations in the State of Florida established following the enactment of the School Readiness Act, which consolidated Florida's early learning services into one integrated program.