

# EARLY LEARNING PARENTS' PAGES

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE OFFICE OF EARLY LEARNING

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE

### World Teachers' Day



### Emotional Awareness



### Helping Babies and Toddlers Cope with Feelings



### Florida Head Start Month



### Kindness Counts



## Halloween: Tips and Tricks!

Halloween may look different for each family this year. No matter what you have planned, staying safe should always be a part of that plan. The Mayo Clinic has [tips and tricks](#) that are easy to remember and use for your family to have fun and stay safe.



- Consider alternatives to carving pumpkins with a knife: art supplies like markers, paint, and glitter can be used to draw on the pumpkins too.
- Make sure your child's costume fits right and is not too loose and is brightly colored, or add reflective tape or stickers. Limit the items your child carries with them while walking. Parents can carry a flashlight in the event streets are not well lit.
- Inspect treats prior to eating: set a rule to have no eating while walking. When you get home you can clean the treats off and have an adult inspect the candy prior to eating to prevent any hazards or allergy issues.

COVID-19 has taken a lot from families this year, including birthdays, weddings, and milestone celebrations. As a parent, you may be wondering if COVID-19 has also taken trick-or-treating: "How will I pass out candy?", "How can I distance my family from others?", "How can I incorporate a mask into my child's costume?". Trick-or-treating and other events are still possible. You can use the following safety tips to help your family be protected while continuing to have fun.

1. Turn on all outside lights and leave a bowl of candy outside your door with a note. Or you can put 1-2 pieces of candy in smaller ziploc bags to limit the number of people who will touch each piece.
2. Continue to follow the [CDC COVID-19 Guidelines](#): stay 6 feet apart (about two arms lengths) while walking from house to house or in a crowded pumpkin patch. Wear a mask when at a public event. If you are not able to wash your hands, use hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.

Continued on page 2...

3. Make a fun activity out of incorporating a mask into your child's costume. Masks can be designed to go with a costume or have your child draw cat whiskers or vampire teeth on their mask. If your child has a plastic mask that is a part of their costume already, it is still best to wear a cloth mask underneath. Remember to check your child's ability to breathe through the plastic and cloth masks. Consider adding gloves to the costume as well.
4. Consider alternative Halloween ideas: a Zoom or FaceTime Halloween party with friends and family, a special Halloween movie night, a family game night with costumes or trick-or-treat around the house to find hidden candy.



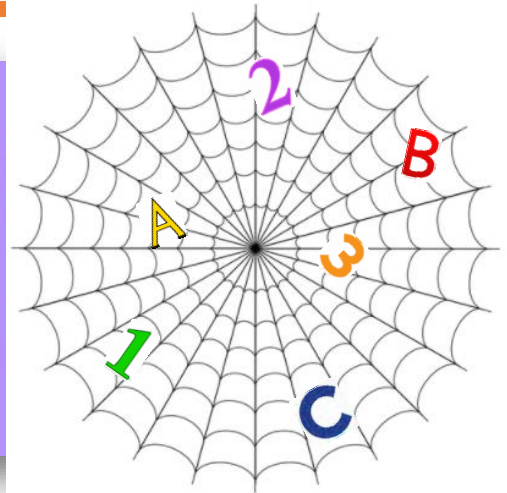
However your family decides to spend Halloween this year, plan ahead and stay safe. Share a photo of your families' costumes on [Facebook](#) or [Instagram](#) using #HalloweenFun.



### October is Domestic Violence Prevention Month

If you find yourself in a domestic violence situation, call:  
1-800-500-1119 or TTY: 1-800-621-4202

Domestic Violence Shelters can be found here:  
<https://bit.ly/FLDVShelters>



## World Teachers' Day

October 5<sup>th</sup> is [World Teachers' Day](#). The theme for this year's celebration of teachers is **"Teachers: Leading in crisis, reimagining the future"**. All around the world teachers have been charged with leaving no child behind during the Coronavirus pandemic. Educators have found ways to meet and teach their students virtually through distance learning and face-to-face as school districts have reopened schools.



Returning to schools with the fear of being exposed to the Coronavirus has made it difficult for some teachers. However, many teachers have courageously returned to teach their students in person and online through distance learning. Many are teaching in schools and online simultaneously or during different times of the day. Most are communicating with families in the evenings or during the day in addition to teaching students face-to-face.



Take time to send a note of thanks or have your child write a note or draw a picture to show appreciation for their teachers. All teachers appreciate kind words of thanks from students and their families. If your child is in a virtual class at home, take a picture or make a video of them thanking their teacher and send it to the teacher.

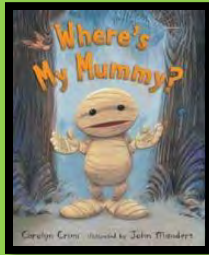
Here are two special songs to share with teachers that will inspire and brighten their day:

<http://bit.ly/youhavemadeadifference>; <http://bit.ly/Ilearnedfromyou>





## Fall Festivity Book Suggestions:



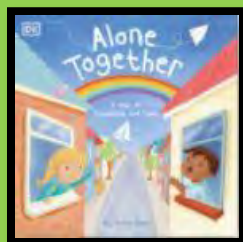
“Where’s My Mummy?”



“Leif and the Fall”



“Pete the Cat: 5 Little Pumpkins”



“Alone Together”

To discover more books for your young reader, just in time for the Fall, visit:

<http://bit.ly/2020FallBooks>



This month we celebrate bilingual children all around the world. With more than 6,000 languages spoken today, learning another language to communicate with people around you can be an exciting activity for your family. Florida has more than 100 bilingual education programs across the state, including 12 of the 67 school districts. Florida is the home of the [first dual language, two-way immersion bilingual education program](#) in the United States.

[First 5 LA](#) shares an article on fun ways to engage your family in bi-lingual and multi-lingual literacy. As a parent, you can encourage early learning of a new language by getting your child excited about learning a new language. You can do this by engaging family members and friends who speak the language your child is learning through cooking together, video messaging and playing games. Another way to support your child’s learning of another language is to send them to schools that teach dual-languages.

[iColorin colorado!](#) shares an article on using storytelling, rhymes and more to make learning another language fun for children of all ages. Learning familiar nursery rhymes in the new language can make learning more engaging and fun. Storytelling brings stories to life. Having your child dress up and act out the story will allow your child to connect emotionally to the story and characters and develop empathy.

For more information on bilingual education go to [Florida Association for Bilingual Education](#). We want to celebrate your bilingual child. Share with us ways your child is learning a new language on [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#) or [Twitter](#) using #OctBilingualChild2020.



## Pumpkin Seeds: Not Just for Eating!

While helping your child [clean out and carve their pumpkin](#), be sure to save the seeds for a perfect healthy snack. [Roasting pumpkin seeds](#) is an easy way to involve your child in cooking. Get creative while cleaning out the pumpkin and ask your child to guess how many seeds they think there will be.



If you have extra seeds, create a math game with your child to practice their counting skills. Draw numbers on disposable cups and help your child count as they place the correct number of seeds in each cup. Using pumpkin seeds allows a hands-on approach to form connections and one-to-one correspondence as they count...and snack too!



## Emotional Wellness Month

This month, the United States Department of Health and Human Services' National Institutes of Health is offering a great resource to promote mental health, [Turning Discovery Into Health, Your Healthiest Self, Emotional Wellness Toolkit](#). As an individual and a parent, you experience many feelings that can impact your overall mental health. According to the [National Institutes of Health](#), your emotional wellness is the ability to successfully handle life's stresses and adapt to change and difficult times. Try these six strategies for improving your emotional health:

**Brighten Your Outlook:**

- Remember the good things you have done.
- Develop healthy physical habits.

**Reduce Stress:**

- Try relaxation methods.
- Set priorities.

**Get Quality Sleep:**

- Limit the use of electronics before you sleep.
- Go to bed and get up each day at the same time.

**Be Mindful:**

- Enjoy a walk and notice your environment around you.
- Practice mindful eating. Be aware of when you are full.

**Cope with Loss:**

- Talk to a caring friend.
- Be patient. Mourning takes time.

**Strengthen Social Connections:**

- Get active and share good habits with family and friends. Build strong relationships with your kids.

For more resources that support your emotional health, visit [Emotional Wellness](#). Share with us how you are incorporating these strategies into your daily routines on [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#) or [Twitter](#) using #EmotionalWellness2020.

## Helping Babies and Toddlers Learn to Cope with Feelings

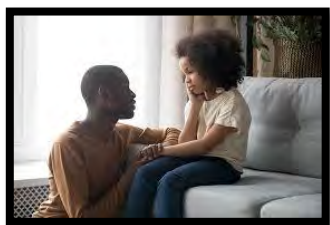


October is Mental Health Awareness Month and a great time to learn more about the mental health of infants and toddlers. The healthy [social and emotional development](#) of your child begins at birth. Their development of healthy social and emotional skills is linked directly to the relationships they form with you, other family members and caregivers. Positive, nurturing relationships formed at an early stage in life is the basis for building healthy skills as your child grows.

Your role in helping your child build healthy relationships begins with responding positively to their cries, coos and facial expressions. Your positive response teaches your child that you are caring and supportive of their needs. It also helps them to learn to talk and interact with others as they grow. This responsive care influences the way your child views their world and everyone in it. Creating this safe and interactive world sets the stage for your child's healthy social and emotional health.

All children have to learn to [recognize and label their feelings](#). When your baby cries, say, "You must be hungry (tired, sick or mad), so I will feed you to make you feel better." As your child grows, they will connect your words to their feelings and learn how to tell you why they are crying (laughing, frightened or excited). This is their first step in learning to [identify and cope with their feelings](#). You are their role model for how they act when they are angry, happy, sad, tired or scared. They watch you and learn from the way you act and what you say when you experience these feelings.

When your baby begins to talk, it is important to help your child use words to label or describe their feelings. Using puppets, dolls or stuffed animals in pretend play will help explain specific feelings and give them words to tell you about their feelings. Pretend that the doll is sick and have the doll say, "I feel tired and hot". Then you say, "You must be sick. Let's take your temperature and give you some medicine." Have your child use the doll to talk about the way they feel when they are sick, mad or happy. When you have strong feelings, talk to your child about the way you feel. Saying "I am scared when I see you climb on the cabinet. I am afraid you will get hurt." This helps them understand why you may have yelled at them when they used a chair and climbed on top of your kitchen counter.



Role-playing what to do when they are angry, scared or mad will help your child learn how to react in specific situations. "Show me what you will do if a friend hits you" provides a way to teach your child healthy social skills and what to do if they experience this at school or during play dates. Ask them to pretend to be the other child and you pretend to hit them. Ask them how that makes them feel. Then show them [what to do or what to say if they are angry with their friend or someone else](#).

[Nemours Children Health System](#) offers a variety of resources that may be useful for supporting your child's social and emotional development. Visit Zero to Three to find resources for families to use to promote their children's [healthy social and emotional development](#) starting at birth.

### OCTOBER IS COMPUTER LEARNING MONTH

This year learning looks different for many families than in years past. Due to the current Coronavirus pandemic, students from VPK to college all around the state are participating more through electronic educational resources than ever before. Watch this short video on 7 tips for parents supporting distance learning.

<http://bit.ly/7SupportTips>





**October is Head Start Awareness Month**

**Florida Head Start Association**

*Excellence. Advocacy. Leadership.*

**#HeadStartAwareness**

On October 22, 1982, President Ronald Reagan proclaimed Head Start Awareness Month as an opportunity to share at the local, state, and national levels the power of Head Start. Presently, Florida provides services to more than 40,000 at-risk children, families, and pregnant women across the state. Over the last 55 years, the Head Start model has been built on evidence-based practices and is continuously adapting—using the best available science and teaching techniques to meet the needs of local communities.

Head Start was inspired during John F. Kennedy's presidential campaign by the sight of children lingering listlessly in front of cabins in the woods of West Virginia, and was brought into existence by Lyndon Baines Johnson in 1965. The program launched as a bipartisan effort to give every child, regardless of the zip code, into which they were born an opportunity to achieve the American Dream.

Head Start's innovation extended beyond the centers' doors. In 1968, Head Start sought to spur more learning in children's homes by funding a new TV phenomenon know today as Sesame Street. Furthermore, to make sure children were vaccinated and healthy, community health centers were started the following year. Also, to help new parents learn effective child-rearing skills, Head Start implemented home visits as a core part of the whole-family approach.

Today, Head Start provides year-round comprehensive services in diverse communities in all 50 states. The federal program has served 32 million children since its creation in 1965 and laid the foundation for children to achieve a lifetime of success, both in the classroom and in life.

For more information about Head Start programs in Florida, visit [www.FLHeadStart.org](http://www.FLHeadStart.org).

The Florida Head Start Association is a nonprofit organization working on behalf of the 42,000 children and families Head Start Programs serve in Florida. FHSA has been the voice for Florida's most vulnerable children and families since 1999 and is committed to enhancing and supporting the capability of local Head Start programs in the delivery of high-quality services for our children and families.

Written by: Wanda Minick, Executive Director of the Florida Head Start Association

## Kindness Counts

All parents want their children to be [kind and empathetic](#) towards others. It is important to teach your child about kindness and empathy. However, kindness and empathy are abstract concepts for young children. [How do you teach your child to treat others with kindness](#) and empathy when they may not understand what kindness and empathy mean?



Children learn best by using their senses. Think of ways to show your child kindness and empathy through examples and words so they can feel, see and hear kindness and empathy. If your child is 5 years old or younger, focus on ways they are helpful and kind to you or other family members. If they say or do something kind, tell them what you see or hear. Saying, “Thank you for helping me pick up your toys. That was being helpful and kind to Mommy.” attaches words to their actions and links their actions to being kind and helpful.



Modeling kindness and empathy is one of the best ways to teach your child these concepts. They can see your actions and hear your words as you help someone pick up packages they’ve dropped or hold the door open for someone who is using a cane or a walker. Saying “Please, let me help you” to strangers, family members and your child, connects words to helpful, kind or empathetic actions. Remember to keep your words brief and simple to make them easy for your child to understand.

[Noticing all of the kind and thoughtful things](#) your child does and telling them why the actions are kind and thoughtful is a way to let them know they are valuable and can

make a difference in the lives of others. “It was kind of you to let your friend play with your favorite toy” is a good way to encourage kindness and helps your child recognize kindness in themselves and others.

Try to recognize and praise all of the acts of kindness you see your child or others do. This helps your child connect their actions and words as well as others’ actions and words to the concept of kindness. When your child was learning to talk and said a new word, you smiled because your repetition and actions paid off. When your child is learning to be kind and empathetic, you need to recognize their efforts and smile and thank them for their kind actions and words. Soon, you and everyone around your child will be smiling when they see the kind actions and hear your child’s kind words.



PBS has many programs that focus on being kind and other important social skills and character traits. Arthur, a favorite PBS program for young children has an episode on empathy (“So Funny I Forgot to Laugh”) that has a free parent guide on empathy in English and Spanish: <http://bit.ly/PBSParentGuide>.



### OCTOBER'S SPECIAL DATES

SAFE SLEEP MONTH  
4-10 NATIONAL FIRE PREVENTION MONTH  
5 WORLD TEACHER DAY  
10 WORLD MENTAL HEALTH DAY  
31 HALLOWEEN



**Richard Corcoran**  
Commissioner of Education  
**Shan Goff**  
Executive Director



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