



# Helping Hands

Offering a helping hand to School Readiness Providers  
A publication from Childcare Resource & Referral



## Family Engagement

Episcopal Children's  
Services

Volume 18, Issue 8

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Inside this issue:

## Budget-Friendly Winter Activities To Do With Children

**Parents Magazine** turned to real parents to learn their favorite ways to keep their kids entertained during the colder months—without breaking the bank.

With their input, we rounded up 11 possibilities for free and inexpensive activities (both indoors and outdoors) to keep the kids occupied and having fun until the warm days of spring and summer return.

Some examples of activities include:

- \* Volunteering
- \* Paper Crafts
- \* Family Game Night
- \* Hiking

To read the full article and see additional activities please visit their website.

<https://www.parents.com/parenting/money/cheap-or-free-winter-activities-to-do-with-kids>



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### ATTENTION HH READERS...

If you have a question, comment, or concern you would like addressed in an upcoming issue of *Helping Hands*, please send an e-mail to: [Brianna.Deosca@ecs4kids.org](mailto:Brianna.Deosca@ecs4kids.org) We will do our best to find the answer, post the comment, and address the concern.



## ELC of North FL Updates

### The ELC of N. Florida announces its 2023 Teachers of the Year!!!!

Whether exceptional teachers are born or made is not the question. What matters is that by the time they make it into the classroom, they are filled with the passion, drive, education and genuine love of teaching and children that students need succeed.

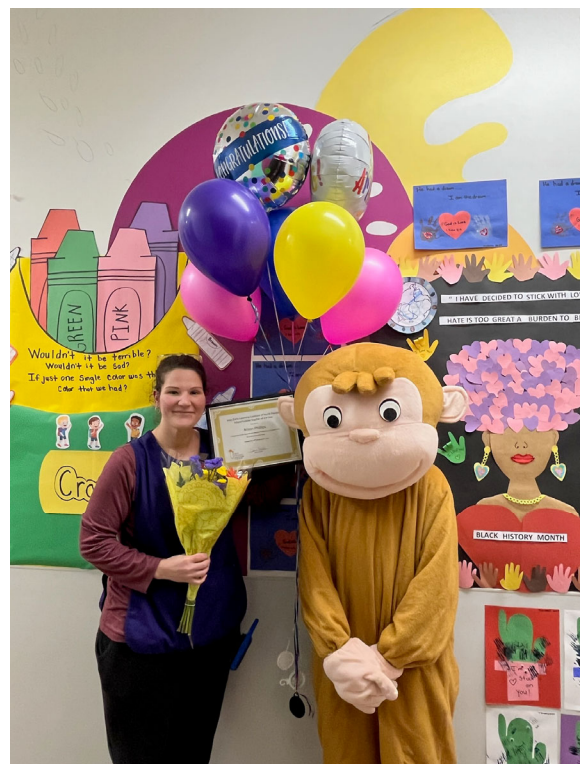
This critical need for exceptional teachers is why The Early Learning Coalition of North Florida is proud to present its winner of the ninth annual Preschool Teacher of the Year Award. The six countywide preschool teacher recognition is to acknowledge the creativity and hard work of those who teach children at the most fundamental time in their lives. Nominations came in from all over the ELCNF service area.

The 2023 Preschool Teachers of the Year are Debra Tubb the preschool teacher of the year winner and Alison Phillips the infant/toddler winner. Debra is a VPK teacher at Deerwood Academy in St. Johns and Alison is an Infant teacher at Island View Baptist Preschool in Orange Park. Both were honored by a surprise prize visit on January 10th with balloons and flowers. They will be recognized at the Early Educators Conference on February 3<sup>rd</sup> at the Thrasher-Horne Center in Orange Park. Each will be awarded a \$500 cash prize from Kaplan Early Learning, Inc. and the Clay Electric Foundation.

“Teaching is a special calling, and ELCNF is excited to be able to recognize preschool teachers who represent the best in the six counties we serve” says Dawn Bell ELCNF CEO. There’s no better job than guiding children down a path of success. Great teachers like these have an incredible impact on our future.”



Debra Tubb VPK teacher at  
Deerwood Academy



Alison Phillips Inf/Tod teacher at  
Island View Baptist Preschool

## Valentine Discovery Basket Katrina Willis, Education Specialist

Resource: [www.hellobee.com](http://www.hellobee.com)

Discovery baskets are simply baskets of items that have a common theme. They provide an opportunity for baby to investigate, and also for conversations between teacher and infants about the items in the basket. They also allow infants to start seeing patterns and categories, which is a pre-math skill.

To make a Valentine discovery basket, first choose your basket, then simply collect red items from around the classroom that will fit easily fit in your basket. Make sure the items you put in your basket are safe for infants/toddlers (not choking hazards). Some items can be used during independent play, and some items may require closer supervision. Introduce the basket to your infants/toddlers, labeling each item and describing how it is used. Then let the infants hold and experience each item. Some items to put in your Valentine basket include: red hearts, small red blocks, red plastic rings, red soft toys, small red ball, red shapes (from a shape sorter).

After exploration of the basket, place it in one of your centers for the infants to use for as long as they are interested. Later you can change out the basket with a different theme. Some ideas include a ball basket, rattle basket, puppet basket, farm animals, or zoo animals.

### CLASS connections:

**Facilitated Exploration:** Be involved by playing with infants, give them space to explore the theme basket. Keep the activity infant focused by following their lead and interests. Expand infants experience by building on infants' interests to create learning opportunities.

**Early Language Support:** Use teacher talk to create a language rich environment. Help infants to learn to express themselves and communicate their needs by initiating and or imitating sounds or words and model turn-taking with infants.





## Hearts for Toddlers Katrina Willis, Education Specialist

Resources: [www.theeducatorsspinonit.com](http://www.theeducatorsspinonit.com)

Toddlers love to explore...why not let them explore the items you already have or recently received for Valentine's Day. The empty box of chocolates can be a fantastic cause and effect toy to open and shut and open and shut, and to hide their smaller toys in. Show the toddlers how to open and close the lid and then let them try to do it independently.

Exploring Felt Hearts: Cut out several felt hearts in various sizes and colors for the toddlers to explore. Be sure to make some that are the same color and size and some that are different sizes (big and small). Place them in a small bowl or bin. Create learning opportunities by labeling the colors, matching size or color, and encouraging the infants and toddlers to touch the hearts. Talk to the toddlers about the hearts-- use words like red, pink, big, small, same, different, soft, etc.

### **CLASS Connections:**

**Facilitation of Learning and Development:** Active Facilitation: guide the toddlers in the exploration of the materials and participate in the activity with them to support learning and development. Expansion of cognition: Embed information that is relatable to their lives.

**Quality of Feedback:** Encouragement and affirmation: give specific feedback and recognition of their efforts or accomplishments.

**Language Modeling:** Supporting language use: have conversations using back and forth exchanges and open-ended questions.



# Countdown to Valentine's Day: 14 Acts of Love

Katrina Willis, Education Specialist

Resources: [makeandtakes.com/valentines-count-down-printable](http://makeandtakes.com/valentines-count-down-printable)

**14 Acts of Love display:** Spreading acts of kindness and good deeds for others will improve the overall positive energy in your classroom and make a positive impact on behavior management. The children will enjoy coming up with acts of love/kindness they can do for others and gluing them on the hearts that they can hang in the classroom. Make a "kindness tree" on the wall out of rolled butcher paper or construction paper with enough "branches" for the children to hang their kindness hearts on. Or you can place the hearts on sticks and have the students fill a decorative jar (as seen in the picture above) as they complete an act of kindness. You can preprint the acts of kindness from the website, and/or help the children write out their own acts of kindness on the strips of paper.



Supplies:

Strips of paper to write on

Various colored hearts cut from construction paper

colored rice: visit the website listed above for the [how-to on coloring rice](#)

clear jar

14 straws or pencils or stick or pixie sticks

printable: [Valentines 14 Acts of Love](#) (see link on website)

scissors

glue sticks

ribbon – optional

## CLASS Connections:

**Regard for Student Perspectives:** Allow children choice and follow their leads when creating the hearts. Give children leadership roles/ responsibilities (clean up, passing out supplies, etc.).

**Concept Development:** Ask children how and why questions about their heart messages. Allow children to brainstorm various acts of kindness that would go well to glue on their hearts. Build on children's previous knowledge about kind acts/acts of love. Relate this activity to the real world: ask children about the nice things they do for family members at home or other times they have helped others.

**Quality of feedback:** If you see that a child is having difficulty completing their task, give them hints to help them better understand the concept. Use conversations about helping others to increase children's understanding. Add new information when the opportunity comes up. Encourage and praise children's efforts by using their names, saying what they did and why they did it well.

## Making Valentine Cards for Seniors Katrina Willis, Education Specialist

Resources: [www.activelittles.com](http://www.activelittles.com)

Prior to making the Valentine's Cards, talk to the children about the importance of showing love and kindness to the elderly, especially those in nursing homes, assisted living, etc. that may be alone/not have family members in their lives.

Place above art materials out on the table and encourage the children to make Valentine's cards for senior citizens. Cut out several heart shapes in various sizes and colors for the children to use. Talk to the children as they make their cards. Ask them about their grandparents: where they live, what they like to do with their grandparents, etc.

### Materials list:

- Various colors of construction paper
- Other types of decorated paper (strips)
- Glue sticks
- Scissors
- Markers/colored pencils/crayons
- Stickers, including puffy heart stickers
- Strips of ribbon
- Googley eyes
- Felt pieces
- Heart and flower shaped cookie cutters
- Pre-printed affirmations/kind messages



### CLASS Connections:

**Regard for Student Perspectives:** Allow children choice and follow their lead when choosing the open art materials they would like to use. Give children leadership roles/responsibilities (cleaning up, passing out supplies, etc.). Encourage students to talk about the cards they are creating, and the relationships they have with their grandparents.

**Concept Development:** Ask children how and why questions about their Valentine card. Encourage the children to brainstorm materials and messages that would go well in the card they are creating. Build on children's previous knowledge about their grandparents and time they spend with their grandparents. Relate this activity to the real world (ask children if they have ever visited a senior citizen or grandparent in a nursing home).

**Quality of feedback:** If you see that a child is having difficulty completing their task, give them hints to help them better understand the concept. Have conversations about grandparents, family, and traveling to increase children's understanding. Add new information when the opportunity comes up. Encourage and praise children's efforts by using their names, saying what they did and why they did it well.

## Kindness Counts Katrina Willis, Education Specialist

Resources: <https://www.scholastic.com/parents/books-and-reading/book-lists-and-recommendations>

The ability to understand other people's emotions is a key developmental skill that your child will need for kindergarten. Social-emotional books are a great way to help them get started! Scholastic Editors put together the following book list specifically to help kindergarteners learn the important skills of active listening, sharing acts of kindness, and imagining how others feel. You can find most of these books at the public library.

Peppa is Kind by Samantha Lizzio  
How Do Dinosaurs Say I Love You? by Jane Yolen  
How Do Dinosaurs Learn to Be Kind? by Jane Yolen  
I Love You Little, I Love You Lots by Douglas Wood  
I Need a Hug by Aaron Blabey  
Rocket and Groot: Little Groot, Big Feelings by Kiara Valdez  
The Caring Me I Want to Be! by Mary DiPalermo  
I Love You, Stinky Face by Lisa McCourt  
Character Counts! Be a Good Citizen by Sierra Harimann  
Everybody!: You, Me & Us by Elise Gravel  
You Are Enough by Margaret O'Hair and Sofia Sanchez  
I Love My New Toy! (An Elephant and Piggie book) by Mo Willems  
Sometimes I Grumblesquinch by Rachel Vail  
The Little Blue Bridge by Brenda Maier  
A Friend for Dragon: An Acorn Book by Dav Pilkey



Resources: ispyfabulous.com



February is the month of love! Make it a month of showing love and happiness to others through kindness. Visit the website <https://www.ispyfabulous.com/valentines-day-kindness/> for the free printable, and you can encourage kindness with your child/ren throughout the month. This fun activity will help teach your child/ren how to be kind and show love. Children will enjoy completing their acts of kindness, coloring in the appropriate heart and placing it on your kindness calendar.

This kindness countdown is so easy to use! You can just print and go. Then, share it with your kids and post it in a central place in your home (such as on your refrigerator). As they do each act of kindness, they'll come running to tell you and **they can color in that heart to mark that complete.** Hopefully, by the end of the month, they'll have colored in all the hearts. With 24 fresh and kind activities, it should last you most of the month (and give you a little room to forget a few days).

\*Download the kindness countdown by visiting the link above.

Remember: love is a verb!



## ASQ:SE-2 Unwrapped: Interpreting Results & Next Steps

Jhordan Speed-Johnson, Inclusion Specialist

Resource: [Factors to consider when interpreting ASQ results](https://agesandstages.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/Factors-to-consider-when-interpreting-ASQ-results.pdf). Retrieved from: <https://agesandstages.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/Factors-to-consider-when-interpreting-ASQ-results.pdf>  
ASQ:SE-2 Follow-Up Process. Retrieved from: <https://agesandstages.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/ASQSE2-Follow-Up.pdf>

When parents, providers, and educators receive the results of the Ages and Stages Questionnaires: Social-Emotional, Second Edition (ASQ:SE-2), it's important to understand what they mean and what steps to take next. We can support their healthy social-emotional development by considering different factors affecting the child's behavior and taking appropriate action. Let's explore a simple guide to help you make sense of the ASQ:SE-2 results and figure out what to do next.

### Interpreting ASQ:SE-2 Results

Think about these factors that can influence the child's behavior and the results of the ASQ:SE-2:

- ♥ **Consistency:** Notice if the behavior is the same in different places or if it happens only in specific situations.
- ♥ **Developmental Delays:** Check for any delays or sensory issues that could affect the child's behavior.
- ♥ **Health Factors:** Talk about sleep, hunger, medications, or anything that may have affected the child's behavior during pregnancy.
- ♥ **Family and Culture:** Understand how the family dynamics and cultural background can shape the child's behavior.
- ♥ **Parent Concerns:** Parent should trust own instincts and share worries with professionals who can help.

### Next Steps for ASQ:SE-2 Results

- ♥ **Get Professional Evaluation:** If there are significant concerns about the child's social-emotional or behavioral development, consult mental health providers for further evaluation and appropriate support.
- ♥ **Talk to A Healthcare Provider:** Parents can share the ASQ:SE-2 results with the child's primary healthcare provider. Give them all the information from the assessment so they can provide the best care.
- ♥ **Explore Community Resources:** Look for parenting classes, support groups, or community resources that can offer guidance and help parent address specific concerns related to the child's social-emotional development.
- ♥ **Engage in Age-Appropriate Activities:** Parents, teachers, and providers can support your child's social-emotional development through recommended activities for their age group. These activities promote healthy emotions and social interactions.
- ♥ **Monitor and Follow-Up:** Parents can consider doing another screening in a few months if parents have concerns. Meanwhile, parents, teachers, and providers can monitor the child's social-emotional progress and engage in activities that support their development.

## T.E.A.C.H

The T.E.A.C.H. (Teacher Education And Compensation Helps) Early Childhood® Scholarship Program funded by the Florida Office of Early Learning provides scholarships for early childhood teachers and facility/family home directors to work toward earning a degree in early childhood education (Associate, Bachelor's, or Master's), an Infant-Toddler Certificate, Florida Staff Credential, Director Credential, National CDA Assessment, or credential renewals.

Your T.E.A.C.H. scholarship will cover the majority of the cost of tuition and books, a per semester student access stipend, a tiered bonus structure for degree-seeking scholars, and much more!

Contact our office today at 877-FL TEACH (877-358-3224) to see how T.E.A.C.H. can work for you.

<https://teach-fl.org/>

# T.E.A.C.H. Scholarships



DIVISION OF  
**Early Learning**

LEARN EARLY. LEARN FOR LIFE.



## Local Professional Development Opportunities (Training Calendar)

To register for one of our great training opportunities, please visit our website:

<https://www.ecs4kids.org/programs/regional-training-institute/>

Click on the registration link to see a list of available courses.

Click on a course and follow the directions for registration and payment.  
The website provides a list of trainings and descriptions offered each quarter.

For CDA information and questions, please contact Danesha Davis, Professional Development Coordinator  
904-726-1500 ext.2299  
904-536-2119 (cell)



## VPK Corner Sarah March, Contract Coordinator

### Provider Profiles

As a reminder Provider Profiles need to be updated annually. The 2024-2025 profiles are now available. Please update your profile for the upcoming 2024-2025 program year as soon as possible. Updated Profiles are necessary for the initiation of VPK Provider Applications.

### VPK Provider Application Updates

Please remember it is imperative that any changes made to your VPK program during the program year must be updated and submitted through the VPK Provider Application within 14 days of the change. This includes changes in director, teachers, aides or substitutes as well as any calendar or classroom changes.

### Contract Department

8649 Baypine Rd Ste 300 Bldg 7

\* Jacksonville, FL 32256

Toll Free: 1-800-238-3463 \* Fax: 904-726-1522

contracts@ecs4kids.org \* www.ecs4kids.org



Warm Line 1-800-238-3463

Ext. 2281 (CNBB)  
Ext. 2227 (PSJ)



Do you have a concern about the health, development, disability, and special needs of a child? If so, call the Warm Line. The purpose of the warm line is to provide advice to child care personnel concerning strategies, curriculum, and environmental adaptations that allow a child to derive maximum benefit from the child care experience.