



Helping Hands

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



Family Engagement

Fall Fun for Kids

Fall is a favorite time of the year. Fall means Harvest Season. The weather is starting to cool off and there are tons of great events going on around town!

Visit a Farm
Navigate a Corn Maze
Visit a Pumpkin Patch
Enjoy a Fall Festival

To read the full article & see additional ideas, please visit the website:

<https://jacksonville.kidsoutandabout.com/content/master-guide-fall-fun-and-around-jacksonville-fl>



**Episcopal Children's
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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.

We will do our best to find the answer, post the comment, and address the concern.

Thanks!

Brianna DeOsca
Editor



National Book Month April Bradford, Program Assessment Specialist

Resources:

[15 Best Baby and Kids Books for National Book Month - Pregnancy & Newborn Magazine](#) [Why Is It Important to Read to Your Child? - Child Mind Institute](#)

October is National Book Month! According to the Child Mind Institute, research shows that children who are read to daily have been exposed to anywhere from 290,000 to a million more words by the time they reach kindergarten compared to their peers. Reading regularly with children also builds background knowledge, exposes children to language and grammar they wouldn't hear in everyday language, and helps children develop empathy. What better time to start than during infancy?! Here are some suggestions to read with your infants:



Bake a Rainbow Cake



Eggy's Emotional Clock



Sleepy Not Sleepy



Happy Camper



Wonderful World

CLASS Connections:

Facilitate Exploration – Involvement: read with children and ask age-appropriate questions; Infant focused: provide opportunities for infants to explore and choose books; Expansion of infants' experience: While infants are "looking" at books, encourage them to persist in turning the pages and looking at the pictures on the pages.

Early Language Support - Verbally label objects seen in pictures; Self-talk while turning pages; Encourage infants to verbalize by initiating sounds and words from the book; Engage in back-and-forth exchanges while looking at the books.

Pumpkin Seed Sensory Play April Bradford, Program Assessment Specialist

Resources: [Simple Counting Pumpkin Seeds Sensory Bin for Fall - Taming Little Monsters](#)

Sensory play is a powerful tool for supporting early childhood development, helping children strengthen fine motor, gross motor, and language skills. For October, consider setting up a festive and educational **Counting Pumpkin Seeds Sensory Bin** that reinforces early math concepts.

Materials:

- Egg cartons, orange paint, green pipe cleaners, black marker
- Pumpkin seeds
- Sensory tools: scoops, tongs, tweezers, measuring cups
- Large bin

Setup:

1. Cut egg cartons into individual cups and paint them orange.
2. Add a green pipe cleaner stem and label each cup with a number.
3. Fill a bin with pumpkin seeds and place the “pumpkins” on top.
4. Add sensory tools for scooping and sorting.

Activity: Toddlers count out seeds to match each number, place them in the pumpkins, and explore sounds by shaking or scooping. For added challenge, invite them to finger-write numbers in the seeds.

This festive center encourages counting, sensory exploration, and motor skill development—all while having fun!



CLASS Connections:

Facilitation of Learning and Development – Ask children how many seeds they have, what number is on each pumpkin and help them finger-write numbers in the seeds (Active facilitation); Ask children if they have ever scooped out a pumpkin before or if they have ever eaten pumpkin seeds (Expansion of Cognition); Children are actively engaged in activities (Children’s Active Engagement).

Language Modeling – Engage in back-and-forth exchanges with children, asking them to tell you about what they are doing and what else they could do with pumpkin seeds (Supporting Language Use); Map your own and children’s actions, saying “I’m taking out seeds,” “I’m putting seeds in the number five pumpkin,” “I’m scooping the seeds,” and “You’re counting the seeds.”

Pounding Pumpkins April Bradford, Program Assessment Specialist

Resources: [Pounding Pumpkins Alphabet Activity](#)

Are you looking for a fun way to incorporate mini pie pumpkins into your fall-themed teacher table and centers? Here is a fun activity that can be modified to fit both! All you need are mini pie pumpkins, golf tees, a kid friendly hammer or mallet, and a marker.

At your small group teacher table, write uppercase and lowercase letters you have previously worked on (to build confidence) along with the current letter(s) of the week on the pumpkins using a marker. Give each child a kid-friendly hammer/mallet and some golf tees. Call out the name of each letter and have children hammer their golf tee on the matching letter. For more advanced learners, call out the letter sounds instead of the letter name and have children hammer their golf tee in the matching letter.

To turn this into an independent center activity for alphabet practice, write the uppercase letters you've already taught on the pumpkins. On the golf tees, write the matching lowercase letters. Children can match the uppercase and lowercase letters and hammer in the golf tees independently.



CLASS Connections:

Regard for Student Perspectives – Support for Autonomy and Leadership: Allows choice, allows students to lead lessons, and gives students responsibility in leading a center.

Instructional Learning Formats – Variety of Modalities and Materials: Interesting and creative materials, hands-on opportunities.

National Pizza Month April Bradford, Program Assessment Specialist

Resources: [Easy Mini Pizza Recipe for Kids \(in 30 minutes!\)](#)

October is National Pizza Month! A fun way to celebrate is to make mini-pizzas together as a family! Following recipes with children helps to reinforce previously taught reading and math skills and also introduce new skills. Having your child read the steps with you helps give practice with understanding the sequence of events while also practicing reading fluency. Children can also hone their math skills by using measuring cups and spoons to add the right amount of ingredients. Here's a simple recipe to try:

- Preheat the oven to 425 degrees.
- **Combine** 2 ¼ teaspoons dry active yeast, 1 cup warm water, and 1 teaspoon of sugar in a mixing bowl. Stir together and let it sit for 10 minutes.
- Add 1 teaspoon salt, 1 teaspoon olive oil, and 2 ¼ cups all-purpose flour to the yeast mixture. Stir until it forms a ball.
- Knead the ball on a lightly floured surface until it feels smooth and elastic. Rub 1 teaspoon of olive oil all over, cover, and let rest for 5 minutes.
- Split the dough into eight pieces and form into balls. Use a rolling pin, clean hands, and a floured surface to stretch the dough into a pizza shape.
- Spread pizza sauce, cheese, and your favorite toppings on top of the dough and bake for 14-16 minutes.



CLASS Connections:

Regards for Student Perspectives-Allow Children choice and follow their leads when choosing toppings they would like to use. Give children leadership roles/ responsibilities (clean up, passing out supplies, leading the lesson/following the recipe)

Concept Development-Ask children how and why questions about their pizza. Allow children to brainstorm toppings that would go well on the pizza they are trying to create. Build on children's previous knowledge about eating pizzas. Relate this activity to the real world (other times they have had pizzas or other recipes they have followed before).

Routine Based Support Guide: Outside

Robert Kozack, Child Development Specialist

[Teacher Routine Guide.pdf](#)

Outside play is key to developing a child's gross motor skills. Interacting with peers is one way for kids to learn new skills, but also teacher-led activities can be a great way to target specific movements and train children to activate those gross motor muscles. Here are some ways to maintain order outside.



- Adapt to the Weather – Summer is hot, and kids get uncomfortable. Ideally, there is going to be plenty of shade, but sometimes the shady parts get crowded. It's highly advisable to have fans outside, bring a mister, or even allow cooling scarves to help regulate body temperature. Most importantly, have plenty of water freely available.
- Rules and Precorrections – Reviewing rules before the children gain full access to the playground is essential. Children can get hurt outside and on equipment but going over rules before every outside time can help remind students how to stay safe. Individual children have different tendencies. If there is a child who regularly throws mulch, make sure to precorrect that behavior by stating expectations before that student gets their hands on the mulch.
- Equipment Sharing – Outside time is a great opportunity to encourage cooperative play. Building, racing, tag, and countless other activities provide chances for kids to bond with each other while learning how to navigate the nuances of cooperation. However, there will be times when all the kids want the same thing and there is not enough space for everyone at once. Here is when we should use timers and redirection. Taking turns is an essential skill for outside activities and being that there are countless activities to play, redirecting may solve most problems quickly.

Making the Move to Kindergarten Together

April Bradford, Program Assessment Specialist

Resource link: [Your Child Is Going to Kindergarten: Making the Move Together | HeadStart.gov](https://www.headstart.gov/your-child-is-going-to-kindergarten-making-the-move-together)

Even though the school year has just started, it's never too early to start planning for your child's transition to kindergarten! Transitioning from a preschool setting to kindergarten can bring lots of anxiety for both children and parents. Have you thought about how to make this transition smoother? Head Start, a comprehensive child development program, has provided some great tips to help you prepare together throughout the year. The link above contains tips and ideas for the entire year, but here are some of the ideas for things to do during the fall:

1. **Explore transition activities:** Ask about kindergarten transition activities offered by your Head Start program and when to start discussing kindergarten with your child.
2. **Prepare information for the new school:** Make a list of your child's strengths, interests, and favorite activities to share with the new school.
3. **Learn about the new school:** Find out if the new school offers special events or visits for new students and families.

Engage with the community: Learn about the new school and district by talking to parents and attending meetings of parent-school groups, cultural and community groups, parent-led networks, and the school board. These steps can help ease the transition and make the upcoming school year a positive experience for your child.



Resources:

[October Bucket List for Families - Glue Sticks and Gumdrops](#)

Fall has finally arrived in North Florida! As cooler temperatures begin to settle in, fall offers a perfect opportunity to bring seasonal joy into the classroom and home. To celebrate, here is a fun fall bucket list that encourages family engagement and outdoor exploration.

Recommended Activities Include:

- Enjoy candy corn or other fall treats
- Visit a pumpkin patch
- Hike Florida's scenic nature trails
- Roast pumpkin seeds
- Explore a haunted house
- Carve or decorate pumpkins

Click the link above to access the entire bucket list form. These simple seasonal activities are a great way for families to slow down, connect, and make lasting memories together. Whether you're carving pumpkins or taking a walk through nature, fall offers countless opportunities to enjoy quality time and celebrate the season as a family.



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.

T.E.A.C.H. Scholarships

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



DIVISION OF
Early Learning
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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

VPK Provider Applications

As a reminder, please be mindful that you are updating and resubmitting your VPK providers applications (VPK 10,11A,11B) with any changes to classrooms, instructors, directors, substitutes, and calendars as soon as possible when they changes occur, so that the new information can be verified and approved by ECS staff, ensuring that your program remains in compliance throughout the program year.

VPK FAST

Progress Monitoring Window 1 has begun! Please remember to check your STAR Test Activity Reports (using the custom dates) to verify all your children have been tested prior to the end of the PM window. At the end of the PM window, please ensure the STAR Test Activity report is generated and saved on file at your facility. These may be requested for monitoring purposes.

If you have a child that is enrolled prior to the PM window ending, the child will need to be tested before the window ends. Keep in mind that once the child is enrolled in the provider portal, it takes 24-48 hours for the child to show in Renaissance. When terminating a child in the provider portal, it is taking longer this year for the child to be removed from Renaissance. If you notice a child is still showing in Renaissance at the end of your PM window that has been terminated in the portal, please do not mark the child as non-participating. Please just indicate on the STAR Test Activity Report that the child was terminated as of the date of termination.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Roushawn Saunders by email at Roushawn.saunders@ecs4kids.org or by phone at 904-726-1500 ext. 2241.

Contract Department

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Warm Line 1-800-238-3463

Ext. 2281 (CNBB)

Ext. 2227 (PSJ)



Do you have a concern about the health, development, disability, or 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.