



Helping Hands

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



Family Engagement

ECS4Kids

Free & Budget Friendly Family Activities to do in Jacksonville

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Inside this issue:

Looking for affordable [family fun](#) in Jacksonville? Jacksonville's 22 miles of white-sandy [beaches](#) and low-cost family activities and [lodging options](#) make this "River City by the Sea" an ideal vacation destination for families. Experience Jacksonville without breaking the bank by partaking in these inexpensive and rewarding activities.

- Immerse in a Natural Wonderland
- Explore Trails & Waterways
- Tour a Historic Plantation
- Attend a Free Festival

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

<https://www.visitjacksonville.com/things-to-do/family/free-affordable/>

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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.

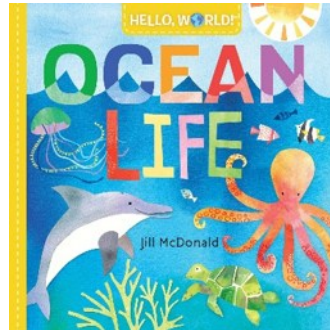
Thanks!
Brianna DeOsca,
Editor



Exploring the Ocean Floor

Christina McDonald, Program Assessment Specialist

Source: <https://youtu.be/BwHXdhzOD28> ; [Ocean Life- Read Aloud](#)



Infants and toddlers love to explore with all of their senses. Why not grab some soft plush sea creatures, plastic bathtub toy sea creatures, and a roll of blue butcher paper to build your own Ocean floor?

First begin by taping down blue butcher paper to your classroom floor. This will allow both infants and toddlers the opportunity to explore through sitting or lying stationary, crawling or walking! Then grab a copy of an Ocean book such as “Ocean Life” by Jill McDonald. You can play a Read Aloud version as well (<https://youtu.be/BwHXdhzOD28>). Your infants and toddlers can explore by touching items while you read.

CLASS Connections:

Facilitation of Learning and Development:

Active Facilitation: guide the infants or toddlers in the exploration of the materials and participate in the activity with them to support learning and development. “Do you think that is a hard or soft dolphin, why don't you try and squeeze it?!”

Expansion of cognition: Embed information that is relatable to their lives by talking about what they have seen at the beach, what their favorite creature in the Ocean is, pet fish, zoo trips to see stingrays, etc.

Language Modeling:

Supporting language use: have conversations using back and forth exchanges and ask open-ended questions, such as “What do you think the dolphin sounds like?”

Advanced Language: Use words dolphin, squid, fish, ocean, tentacles, etc.

Ocean Exploration

Christina McDonald, Program Assessment Specialist

Source: [Ocean Exploration: Building an Ocean Sensory Bin](#)



Did you know that June 8th is World Oceans Day? Why not create an ocean-themed sensory bin to explore? This is a great small group activity for preschoolers to work on their reading skills, then enjoy some tactile hands-on learning.

Material ideas:

- “Ocean” container – sensory bin, bucket or small kid pool
- Water, food coloring
- Shells, rocks, pretend sea creatures, sand
- Cups of different sizes, shovels, sponges ([Picture Credit](#))

Using your sensory bin bucket, the children can help pour or shovel the sand onto the bottom, fill up the bucket with water and allow students to add blue food coloring (if desired). Toss in any “Ocean” items you want!

There are many ways to play with your Ocean Sensory Bin! Everyone can excavate animals from the ocean bottom. Encourage the preschoolers to share cups to pour water back and forth or wash their sea creatures with sponges. If your preschoolers decide to do something totally different with the items, support that autonomy by asking questions and encouraging peer relations by joining in with each other to test out new ideas.

CLASS Connections:

Concept Development:

Ask children how and why questions, such as “How many sea creatures do you think will fit in your big cup? How many in your small cup?” as they are playing. This gives them a chance to compare and contrast naturally. Build on children’s previous knowledge about sea creatures. “Why do you think that is a dolphin? What made you say that was a whale?” Relate this activity to the real world: ask children about visiting the Ocean with family members at home or other times they have had experiences with sea creatures.

Language Modeling:

Use conversations to help students increase their understanding. Add new information when the opportunity comes up by labeling items and defining advanced language. “I’m going to use the shovel to excavate the shells. Who knows what the word excavate means?!”

Beach Scavenger Hunt

Christina McDonald, Program Assessment Specialist

Source: [Beach Scavenger Hunt](#)

June is a great time to celebrate the start of Summer by doing a Beach Scavenger Hunt. This can be adapted in so many ways for children. If you don't want to, or can't go to the beach, you can go to the park instead. Create your own scavenger hunt by hiding themed items, or watch a video online to look for items through a virtual field trip! ([Virtual Field Trip](#))

You can make your own list of items to look for but here are a few ideas to get you started. Have the children come up with the items you're looking for and create your own Scavenger Hunt cards or group sheet checklist on a clipboard.

- Sandcastle
- Beach ball
- 3 types of seashells
- Shark teeth
- Fish or Sea Creature



Behaviors During Transitions

Jhordan Speed-Johnson, Child Development Specialist

Does this sound familiar? A child cries when told center time is over, runs away and hides when it's time to go inside from outside play, or holds tight to a parent at morning drop-off.

Transitions can be hard when kids don't want to stop what they're doing or feel unsure. These moments can pile up and leave you feeling frustrated and rushed. Below are ways to ease those tough moments and help your class feel more confident about what's coming next.



Behavior: Child doesn't want to leave activity

Give countdown warnings and use a visual timer so the child knows what's coming.

Use a first-then schedule or show what's next on the visual calendar.

Let the child carry a favorite toy or object to the next activity.

Use the same cue each time, like a clean-up song or a special bell.

Behavior: Child doesn't want to go to next activity

Use a fun song, movement game, or give the child a job like line leader. Show something fun about the next activity on the schedule or with a picture.

Offer a simple choice like "Do you want to hop or tiptoe to the rug?"

Let the child carry a photo or object that shows what's coming next.

Behavior: Child struggles with saying goodbye to parent

Create a short goodbye routine the parent and child use each day.

Let the child bring a comfort item or photo from home.

Read a story like "*I Go to Preschool*" to help them prepare.

Help the child wave goodbye to their parent, then pick something fun to do next.

Teach: How to follow a daily schedule, how to follow transition cues, handle big feelings during changes, use goodbye routines, and know what's coming next.

All strategies in this article are adapted from the Routine-Based Support Guide. For a comprehensive list of strategies for this routine, visit the NCPMI's Routine-Based Support Guide: <https://challengingbehavior.org/document/routine-based-support-guide/>

Preparing Your Kindergartener for Reading

Christina McDonald, Program Assessment Specialist

Resource: <https://www.fldoe.org/academics/standards/just-read-fl/families/reading-tips-for-parents>



The Summer is a great time to explore reading with your soon to be Kindergartener! Whether your little one is already reading or just starting to learn this important life skill there are a ton of resources available to plant a love of literacy early on. Here are some ideas for how to increase your reading and word consumption.

Create a cozy Storytime cove: Let your child pick an area of the house to set up their own cozy reading area. Together, you can set up books and writing materials with their favorite pillows and stuffed animals to create your own reading center.

Word Scavenger Hunt: Encourage your child to find words by making a game out of it. See who can find the most words a day. You can point out printed words in your home, when out shopping, at the doctor's office, or even while driving during those Summer road trips!

Play!: There are tons of games created to help foster literacy and fun. Many games such as Scrabble come in kids editions such as Scrabble Jr. Let your child pick out some new games and play with them inside to beat the heat or take them with you on a picnic.

Libby: Whether you are reading print books, listening to audio books, or watching stories come alive online your local library is a great place to start. You're probably aware that children can check out books to bring home in person, but they can also use the library app "Libby" (<https://libbyapp.com/>) to check out books digitally!

Storyline Online: Do you want to watch and listen to stories with your child? Check out Storyline Online for a wealth of books being read by famous people such as "A Tale of Two Beasts" read by Sarah Silverman [Storyline Online - A Tale of Two Beasts](#) .

For more information on ways to help your child be prepared for reading in Kindergarten check out: [Reading Tips for Parents](#) .

Explore the Outdoors

Christina McDonald, Program Assessment Specialist

Resource(s)/Website(s): [Fun Things to Do in Florida - Activities, Tours, Places, and More \(https://www.visitflorida.com/things-to-do\)](https://www.visitflorida.com/things-to-do)

[Campgrounds and Camping Reservations - Georgia State Parks & Historic Sites \(https://gastateparks.resrveamerica.com/\)](https://gastateparks.resrveamerica.com/)

[JaxParks-https://www.jacksonville.gov/departments/parks-and-recreation/recreation-and-community-programming/all-parks](https://www.jacksonville.gov/departments/parks-and-recreation/recreation-and-community-programming/all-parks)



With the Sunshine State being home to so many amazing natural resources, you can pick a new adventure every day! Whether you are staying close to Jacksonville or heading North into Georgia, spend some time outside this Summer! Head outdoors to the beach, pool, local state park, camping sites, or hit the springs. There are so many family friendly activities that you can combine learning opportunities with fun to create those core Summer memories! Here are a few hidden gems worth exploring.

Crooked River State Park in Georgia is very family friendly with cottages for camping, fire pits (s'mores anyone?!), playgrounds, areas to fish, nature trails, and is one of my family's favorites because it's less than an hour from Jacksonville.

Huguenot Memorial Park in Jacksonville, FL features a beach with drivable access and is also part of the Great Florida Birding Trail. The seabird colony at Huguenot Memorial Park is made up of Laughing Gulls, Royal Terns, Brown Pelicans, and Sandwich Terns. This could be a fun scavenger hunt for the family. Just remind the kids don't feed the birds!

Devil's Den is located north of Ocala and has an underground spring that stays 72 degrees all year! This spring tops the family friendly list being the only spring in Florida without alligators, but you do have to be a strong swimmer to snorkel here. You can camp in their cabins, grill, picnic, snorkel, scuba dive, stargaze, and so much more.

Explore JaxParks- Looking to stay close by? No problem! Whatever part of Jacksonville you are wanting to explore there are swimming pools, parks, and playgrounds open to the public all Summer! You can search their online directory at: [JaxParks](#) and even download their mobile app. **Crystal Springs Road Park**, for example, offers playscapes, grills, picnic shelters, restrooms, an adult baseball field, 4 lighted tennis courts, 2 pickleball courts, 3 handball courts and nature trails.

So why not let the family vote on which activities you want to add to your family calendar this June!

T.E.A.C.H.

The T.E.A.C.H. (Teacher Education And Compensation Helps) Early Childhood® Scholarship Program funded by the Division 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/>



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

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.



VPK Corner Sarah March, Contract Coordinator

VPK FAST

Information was sent to providers through constant contact and through regular email regarding the VPK FAST Test Administrator Trainings for 26-27 program year. The training is available now through Educator Academy. If you have any questions regarding the training or did not receive the email, please contact Roushawn Saunders at VPK@ecs4kids.org.

Reminder: Reports in Renaissance for the 25-26 program year will only be available through June 30th. Please remember to use the custom dates when generating the reports. If you are unsure how to generate the report using the custom dates, please contact Roushawn Saunders at VPK@ecs4kids.org. She has a "How to" document she can share with you that will be helpful.

Warm Line 1-800-238-3463

Ext. 2281 (Clay, Nassau, Baker, Bradford)

Ext. 2227 (Putnam, St. Johns)

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.

