



# Helping Hands

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



## Family Engagement

Episcopal Children's  
Services

## 2026 Guide to Halloween & Fall Fun

Volume 21, Issue 4

October 2026

Inside this issue:

Fall 2026! If you're ready to break out the plaid and sip on a pumpkin spiced latte, this fall event guide is for you! We have the scoop on the area's best ways to celebrate fall — from pumpkin patches and fall festivals to Halloween fun and trick-or-treating around Jacksonville.

Fall Festivals & Markets

Corn Mazes

Pumpkin Patches

Farm Festivities

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

<https://jacksonvillemom.com/in-around-jax/things-to-do-in-jacksonville-halloween/>

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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:

**Bri-**

**anna.DeOsca@ecs4kids.org.**

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

Thanks!

Brianna DeOsca  
Editor



## Kid's Music Day Alexis Williams, Program Assessment Specialist

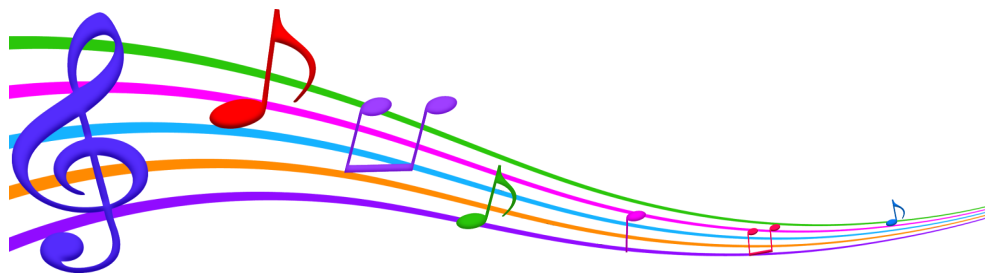
Resources:

[11 Music and Movement Activities for Infants and Toddlers - Play. Learn. Thrive.](#)  
[10 music and movement activities for the Early Years | Family](#)

Kids Music Day is celebrated on the first Friday of October and inspires children worldwide to explore sound and enjoy music. Music and movement encourage fine and gross motor skills, creative expression, and can be the starting point for language development for the little ones. Singing songs to babies can also aid in establishing connections between concepts like words and objects through repetition. Music can be introduced at any time, and there is something available for every age and child to like and relate to. Here are some activities and ideas you can do to honor this day:



- Because it takes infants months to learn how to clap, demonstrate the action while they are watching or help them put their hands together with music playing.
- Give infants toys that make noise to play with. If they can hold objects, let them shake rattles while music plays in the background. Guide their hands so they shake the rattle to the beat and rhythm of the music.
- Follow the (Musical) leader. Have the toddlers take turns being the leader and tell them to pick a dance that the other children have to follow.
- Have a dance party. Sometimes children need to get their wiggles out. Throw on Baby Shark or Freeze Dance and let them show off their moves!



### CLASS Connections:

Facilitation of Learning and Development: Join the experience and build on what the infant is doing. If they are moving along to the music, follow their movements. If they are not, initiate their learning and encourage them to engage with music or instruments.

Language Modeling: Use descriptive language to explain what you're doing, such as "I'm putting your hands together" and "We're rocking to the music." Also, look for opportunities to engage in turn-taking conversations. Ask the infants if they like the music, if they listen to the same songs at home, or if they have heard the song before.

Resource: <https://xiaopandapreschool.com/space-activity-for-preschoolers/>

World Space Week is the largest space event in the world celebrated between October 4th and October 10th every year. If there's one thing we know about preschoolers, it's that they are full of wonder. And this is a perfect opportunity to dig into the mystery of outer space! World Space Week focuses on space exploration, new technology, and innovations in space science. Throughout the week, set up dramatic play areas for the children to be astronauts in, sensory bins where they can feel moon rocks, and an arts and crafts center where they can make their own constellations. The options for creativity are endless with this theme and are sure to generate learning for children and joy for teachers.



### CLASS Connections:

**Instructional Learning Formats:** Be engaged in what the children are doing and build on learning. Present a variety of strategies, such as audio, visual, and hands-on materials. Also, be clear about what the lesson is and make sure the children know what they are supposed to be learning from the content.

**Concept Development:** Relate to the children's everyday lives by asking them what objects in space they have seen and when. Prompt them to brainstorm by asking them what they think they would see if they went to space, what they think it would feel like, and how long they think it would take to get back home.

Resources: [World Animal Day | EYFS & KS1 Activity Ideas — Little Owls Resources - Free and Premium Early Years Printables](#)

World Animal Day is observed on October 4<sup>th</sup> worldwide to promote conservation efforts, protect animal rights, and bring unity to the animal welfare movement. Celebrating this day with children can teach them about new animals, help them understand empathy, and deepen their curiosity about the world around them. The children can learn about animals on this day by playing in sensory bins, doing different animal movements and sounds, and making animal habitats. Children can be creative by doing art activities like paper plate animal masks, learning about endangered species, and playing in a zoology dramatic play center. You can also use this opportunity to further the children's higher-order thinking, such as having them classify the animals by habitat or appearance and asking them which animals would make good pets and why. There are countless ways for children to honor their furry friends on this day!



## Using Accommodation to Promote Accessible Learning

Robert Kozack, Child Development Specialist

Source-[Rock Your Classroom](#)

Providing appropriate accommodations are essential to creating an accessible classroom where every child can actively participate and succeed. Effective teachers ensure that instructional practices are responsive to individual learning needs while maintaining high expectations for all students.

Universal supports begins with understanding each child's strengths, needs, family goals, instructional plans, or learning goals. Teachers play an important role in collaborating with families to develop strategies that support student success. This collaborative approach helps ensure that classroom instruction aligns with each child's individualized goals and promotes consistency across learning environments.

For children who require additional support, teachers should design instruction that incorporates functional and meaningful goals while adapting the learning environment, materials, curriculum, and daily activities. Effective planning considers children's developmental levels, interests, communication methods, and learning styles. Educators may also integrate visual supports, environmental adaptations, assistive technology, and instructional prompts to improve access to learning and encourage active participation throughout the school day.

Children with more intensive needs may require individualized accommodations that include behavior plans, adaptive materials, and more comprehensive instructional supports. Teachers should be knowledgeable about the appropriate use of accommodations and stay consistent to enhance the student's success in all activities.

By thoughtfully implementing accommodations, teachers create equal learning opportunities that enable all children to engage fully in classroom experiences, develop essential skills, and make meaningful progress toward their individual educational goals.



## World Mental Health Day

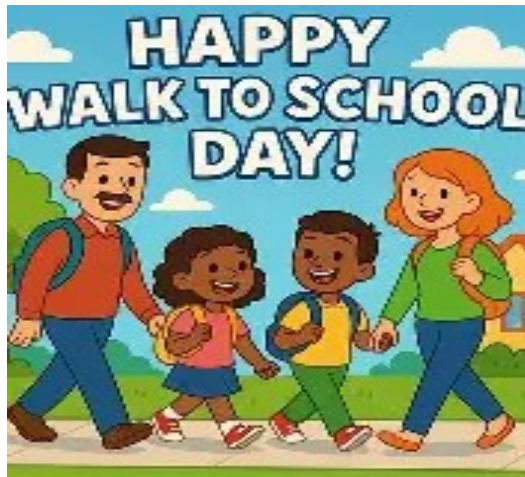
Alexis Williams, Program Assessment Specialist

Resources: [15 Fun and Effective Mental Health Activities for Kids](#)

Going to kindergarten can be a nerve-wracking transition for children and parents. A new school, new friends, and a new normal can be a lot for a child to process. World Mental Health Day is observed on October 10th and can aid in helping children understand and process the upcoming changes of entering kindergarten. This day is beneficial for children because it emphasizes understanding emotions, building resilience, and learning strategies to cope with stress and challenges. You can celebrate this day by encouraging kindness, such as having the children share nice things about each other or by putting on soothing music and giving them coloring sheets so they can practice mindfulness coloring. The beauty of this day is that there are so many methods that can calm them down and you can try a few and see what the children like the most.



Resources: National Walk to School Day: 10 Fun & Safe Ways to Gamify the Trip



National Walk to School Day gives parents a chance to get involved with their children's safety, teach them how to cross streets, and promote outdoor movement and physical activity. This day also, sometimes called National Walk and Bike to School Day, encourages children to embrace active transportation every first Wednesday of October. This day spotlights the health benefits, environmental gains, and community safety improvements that come with walking or riding a bike to school. You can celebrate this day by playing outdoor games, such as hopscotch, teaching children about road signs and stoplights, and informing them how to walk the roads safely. Also, if your children's school is close to your home, go over safe routes from school to home. Most of all, get out and have fun! This day is about getting outside and being active while safe. That's something the whole family can do!



## 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/>



**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 FAST**

PM dates have been fixed and are now showing the 2026-2027 PM dates. Progress Monitoring Window dates can be checked using the following link: <https://www.ecs4kids.org/providers/vpk-providers/fast-progress-monitoring/> You will need the email address (user name) you used for Renaissance and your provider ID to log in. Please note changes to classroom calendars may impact the progress monitoring dates, please verify these dates anytime you have a calendar change. Please ensure that the VPK FAST assessments are being completed during VPK instructional hours. As a reminder children are required to be tested 3 times prior to marking them as non-participating.

If you have any questions regarding VPK FAST, please email Roushawn Saunders at [VPK@ecs4kids.org](mailto:VPK@ecs4kids.org).

### **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, Bldg. 7 Ste. 300 \* Jacksonville, FL 32256  
Toll Free: 1-800-238-3463 \* Fax: 904-726-1522  
[contracts@ecs4kids.org](mailto:contracts@ecs4kids.org) \* [www.ecs4kids.org](http://www.ecs4kids.org)

**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.

