

## Math Is All Around Us: Partnering with Families

By Terri Konczak, Southwest VPK Regional Facilitator

An exciting trend has developed in how families and children are engaging together in playful early learning. Unfortunately, there is less attention paid to how educators and families can support early math. Research shows that early math skills are high predictors of later academic success, even more so than reading abilities. Like literacy, math is a tool, and one that can be developed and enhanced early in life. Below are six ideas for educators and families on how to talk, sing, read, write and play with math. These practices can be adopted by early childhood educators in a variety of home-, center- and community-based settings.

**Numbers:** Children are born with an ability to understand numbers. Families and other adults can help children develop these concepts in a variety of ways. Families can talk about numbers, count, and even sing number songs. The National Association for the Education of Young Children suggests a number of fun math songs and activities, including “Fingers, fingers, 1, 2, 3.” Families can also read books about number concepts.

**Patterns:** Patterns are everywhere and understanding them is the precursor to algebraic thinking. Patterns can be visual (like beads on a string), auditory (such as the repetition of one slow note and then two quick ones) or physical (for example, jumping two times then clapping). Families can talk about patterns they see, sing songs with a catchy beat and read stories and poetry with a repeating rhythm. Talking about and creating patterns with everyday objects or pattern blocks is an enjoyable game families can play while shopping in the grocery store, biding time at the laundromat or even waiting at the doctor’s office.

**Shapes:** Nearly everything that children see has a shape. Children encounter shapes as two-dimensional circles, triangles and rectangles as well as three-dimensional solids like balls, cans and boxes. Creating opportunities for families and children to play with and explore objects like magnet blocks, puzzles, Legos, and tangrams is a great way to help foster this knowledge as well as spatial awareness (article continued on page 2).



### RULES

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VPK CURRICULUM  
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Remember to check our site regularly for a listing of proposed rules and notices of dates and times of workshops.

<http://bit.ly/2gkcQIN>



Illustration by The Joan Ganz Cooney Center at Sesame Workshop



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**Space:** Spatial awareness involves using and understanding vocabulary, such as above, below, inside, around, on top of, between, next to and might be one of the most important ways to boost understanding of numbers and operations. Before story time, sing songs about who is to the left and right of each child and have children take turns standing up and down.

**Comparisons:** Quantity and measurement matter to children. How else would they know they need more cookies or want the swing to go higher and higher? Children quickly learn that adding makes more and longer and taking away makes less and shorter. Families and educators can talk, sing and read about quantity as they occur in children's daily lives. They can also have children use fingers, arms and legs to measure objects.

**Positive Attitude:** Perhaps more than anything else, families can talk positively about math and encourage children to be excited about it. Saying things like "I like math" or "Let's use math to figure it out" can go a long way to helping children feel confident in their math abilities from the beginning.



Illustration by The Joan Ganz Cooney Center at Sesame Workshop

*The right angle from which to approach any problem is the "Try Angle."*

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# COMING SOON!!!

## Early Learning and Developmental Standards Website

The Office of Early Learning is pleased to share information about the new Florida Early Learning and Developmental Standards website which will be available soon.

This site includes the revised Early Learning and Developmental Standards: Birth to Kindergarten (2017) and related resources through the collaboration of the Child Care Resource and Referral, School Readiness and VPK program units within the Office of Early Learning.

The following features and resources will be added to the new website over the next few months as new information becomes available.

- Educator guides
- Standard examples
- Links to resources including videos
- Family resources

Please feel free to contact Melinda Webster at [Melinda.Webster@oel.myflorida.com](mailto:Melinda.Webster@oel.myflorida.com) with questions.

*“Childhood is messy and beautiful.” ~ Rachel Martin*

### Be in the Loop!

VPK Learning Circles are ongoing opportunities for early childhood professionals to share strategies, research and best practices in VPK classrooms. Learning Circle activities include

- Practicing new ideas and skills.
- Professional networking.
- Sharing resources and experiences.
- Discussion and brainstorming solutions for challenges faced in the field.

### Who should attend?

VPK providers, directors, teachers and administrators who would like an opportunity to network with other professionals in early childhood education.

### Who do you contact for more information about Learning Circles?

Your local VPK regional facilitator organizes and facilitates the Learning Circles. You can find contact information for your regional facilitator on the OEL website.



	March Circles	March Participants	Total Learning Circles in 2017-18	Total Participants in 2017-18
Face-to-Face	14	126	184	1387
Web-Based	1	4	23	219

# Professional Development

Florida's Office of Early Learning in collaboration with the Florida Department of Children and Families (DCF) offers a variety of online and instructor-led training opportunities. To register for any of these training opportunities, please visit DCF's training website at <http://bit.ly/1oHgYPm>.

Online Courses	March Completers	2017-18 Total Completers
Standards for Four-Year-Olds	244	2517
Integrating the Standards: Phonological Awareness	56	335
Emergent Literacy for VPK Instructors	437	3954
Language and Vocabulary in the VPK Classroom	166	972
Mathematical Thinking for Early Learners	228	1219
Working to Create Positive Learning Environments: Preventive Strategies	120	710
Developing the Socially and Emotionally Competent Child	96	487
English Language Learners in the VPK Classroom	90	537
How to Administer the Florida VPK Assessment	80	673
VPK Assessment Instructional Implications	58	351
VPK Director Credential Course	91	727

Instructor-led Courses	March Classes	March Participants	2017-18 Total Participants
Standards for Four-Year-Olds	0	0	112
Integrating the Standards: Phonological Awareness	1	10	244
How to Administer the Florida VPK Assessment	0	0	351
VPK Assessment Instructional Implications	0	0	249
*EMEL: Making Sense of Sets and Numbers	3	16	787
*EMEL: Counting and Operating with Numbers	15	135	670
*EMEL: Patterns, Measurement and Data	6	52	753
*EMEL: Shapes and Spatial Relationships	5	38	374

\*EMEL– Early Mathematics for Early Learners