



Division of Early Learning

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Chancellor of Early Learning

Florida's Structure for Early Learning

State Board of Education



FL Department of Education

Division of Early Learning

- Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R)
- School Readiness (SR)
- Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK)
- Gold Seal Quality Care Program



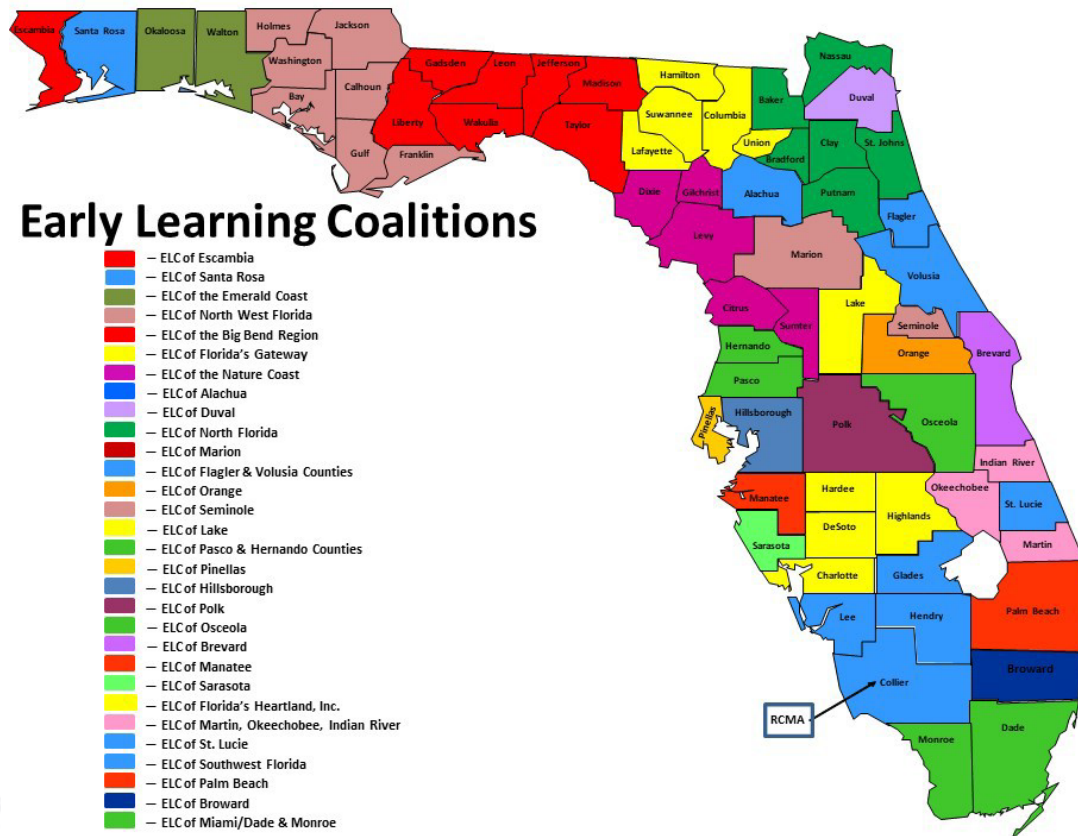
Department of Children and Families (DCF)
Program Oversight for:
Childcare licensing and regulation



30 Early Learning Coalitions (ELCs):
Provide local discretion to ensure programs meet
unique community needs

Early Learning Coalitions and RCMA

The Department of Education's Division of Early Learning (DEL), administers SR and VPK programs statewide, in partnership with thirty (30) early learning coalitions (ELCs) and the Redlands Christian Migrant Association (RCMA).



DEL Goals

1

Engage families as their child's first teacher and support them in making informed decisions on high-quality child care that best meets their family needs.

2

Support families by providing high-quality child care as they work to become economically self-sufficient.

3

Build high-quality early learning programs to meet the individual needs of all children.

4

Increase the knowledge and skills of early learning professionals to provide high-quality care and education.

5

Increase Kindergarten readiness, setting children on a path to learn, graduate and succeed.

Importance of Kindergarten Readiness

- **90%** of a child's brain is fully developed by the age of 5.
- For children who enter kindergarten behind, **roughly 75%** will never catch up to their classmates.
- The **strongest predictors of later achievement** are school-entry math, reading and attention skills.
- State and local **prekindergarten programs**, almost without exception, **improve academic readiness for school**.
- Participants in the prekindergarten program **scored higher on third-grade language arts tests** than did nonparticipants.
- Participation in an **early childhood experience** (child care or preschool) **increases high school graduation rates**.



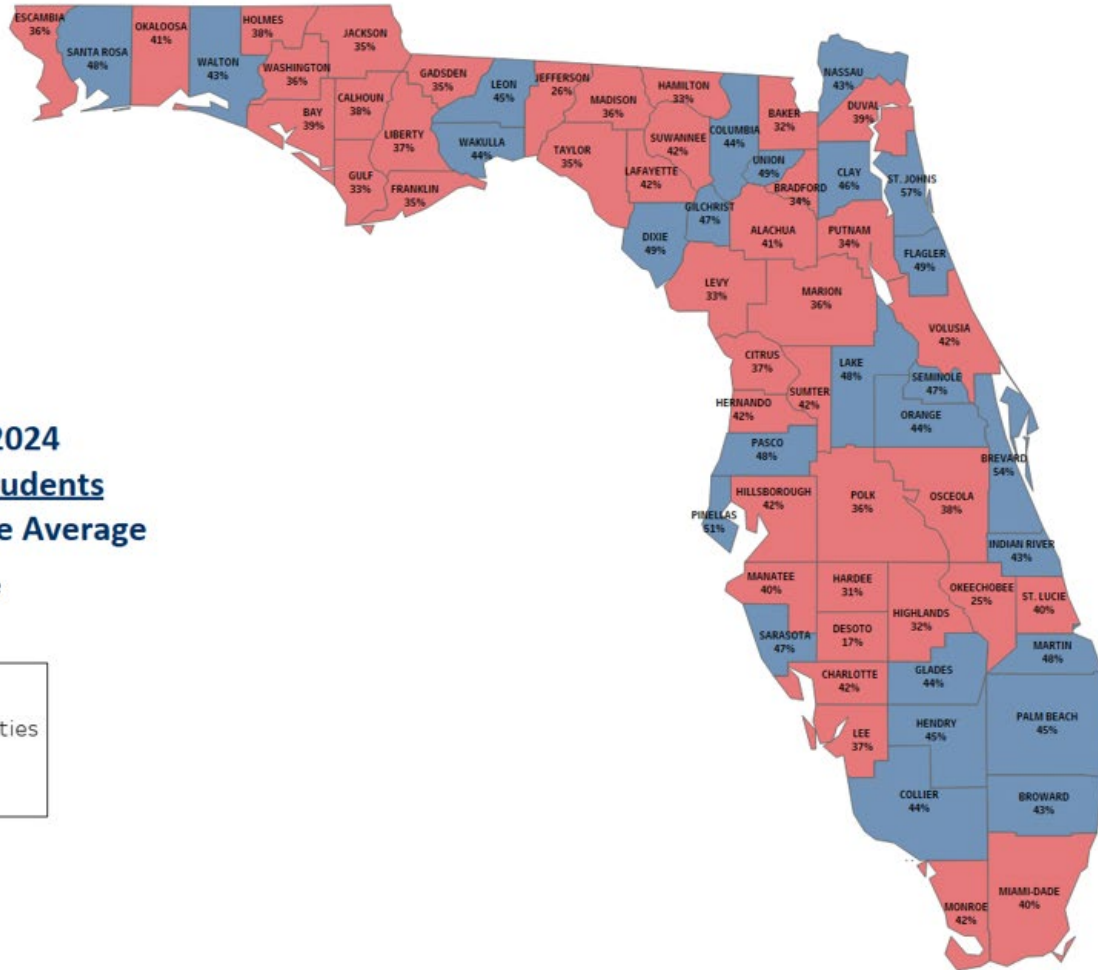
2024 FAST PM 1 Kindergarten Results by County

Percentage of Fall 2024 Public Kindergarten Students at or above the Statewide Average

Statewide Percentage
"Ready" = 43%

% "Ready"

■ 43% and Above - 26 counties
■ Below 43% - 41 counties



- Kindergarten Readiness was redefined as scoring at or above 707 USS on FAST Star Early Literacy. Previous cut score for Kindergarten Readiness was scoring at or above 690 USS.
- The new cut score was applied for the first time for 2024 FAST PM1 Kindergarten Results. **Therefore, 2024 Kindergarten Readiness results serve as a baseline year.**
- It cannot be used for comparison to previous Kindergarten Readiness results.**

Knowledge Check

- What agency is responsible for child care licensing and regulation?
- Who does the DEL work with to implement early learning programs at the local level?
- DEL is the lead agency for implementing what early learning programs?
- Name 3 DEL goals.
- Why does Kindergarten Readiness matter?
- **Talk to your neighbors about what you already know about VPK and SR.**

VPK

- **Purpose of VPK:** To prepare every four-year-old in Florida for kindergarten and build the foundation for their educational success.
- **For Whom?**
 - Florida children 4-years-old on or before Sept. 1.
 - Children born from Feb. 2 through Sept. 1 of a calendar year may enroll in VPK either the program year they turn 4 or the next.
- **Program Options:**
 - **School Year Program:** Up to 540 hours of instruction available between August through June.
 - **Summer Program:** Up to 300 hours of instruction available between May through August.
 - **Specialized Instructional Services (SIS):** Services available outside traditional VPK classroom setting for 4-year-olds with disabilities – child must have current individual educational plan (IEP) from local school district.
- **Budget:** \$434 Million; Base Student Allocation:
 - School-Year: \$3,029
 - Summer: \$2,586

VPK Provider Eligibility

- Types of private providers eligible to offer VPK:
 - **Child care facilities** (licensed by DCF under section 402.305, Florida Statutes (F.S.))
 - **Family day care homes** (licensed under s. 402.313, F.S.)
 - **Large family child care homes** (licensed by DCF under s. 402.3131, F.S.)
 - **Faith-based providers** (license-exempt under s. 402.316, F.S.)
 - **Non-public schools** (license-exempt under s. 402.3025, F.S.)
- License-exempt providers must be accredited by an association listed in s. 1002.55(3)(b)1., F.S., or hold a current Gold Seal designation.
- All private VPK providers must also have a program director with a VPK Director Credential issued by DCF.
- Public schools, including charters, may offer VPK.
- For the summer VPK program, school districts are required to provide admission for every eligible child whose parents enroll them in the district's VPK program [s. 1002.53(6)(b), F.S.].

VPK Provider Eligibility

- Both private providers and public schools that offer VPK must:
 - Employ qualified instructors
 - Teach Florida Early Learning and Developmental Standards for 4-Year-Olds
 - Maintain required class sizes:
 - Lead teacher/child ratio – 1:11
 - Lead teacher + assistant/child ratio – 1+1:20
 - Participate in program assessment: Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS)
 - Administer FAST Star Early Literacy

Florida Early Learning and Developmental Standards (FELDS)



Florida Early Learning and Developmental Standards Birth to Kindergarten (2017)

An Educator's Guide to Understanding
**THE FLORIDA EARLY LEARNING
AND DEVELOPMENTAL STANDARDS:
BIRTH TO KINDERGARTEN**



Educator's Guide to Understanding the Florida Early Learning and Developmental Standards: Birth to Kindergarten

Program Assessment

- CLASS = **C**lassroom **A**ssessment **S**coring **S**ystem is a research-based method of measuring, evaluating and improving teacher-child interactions from infant care through Prekindergarten.
- ELCs are responsible for administration of CLASS, which must be conducted by qualified individuals.
- Providers of School Readiness (SR)/Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) must have a 4.00 composite score to contract in future years.
- Over 99% of SR and VPK providers scored 4.0 or higher.

Program	2019- 2020	2020- 2021	2021- 2022	2022- 2023	2023- 2024	2024- 2025
School Readiness (Fiscal Year)	4.43	4.78	4.85	4.95	5.11	5.23
VPK (School-Year)	-	-	-	5.08	5.21	5.31

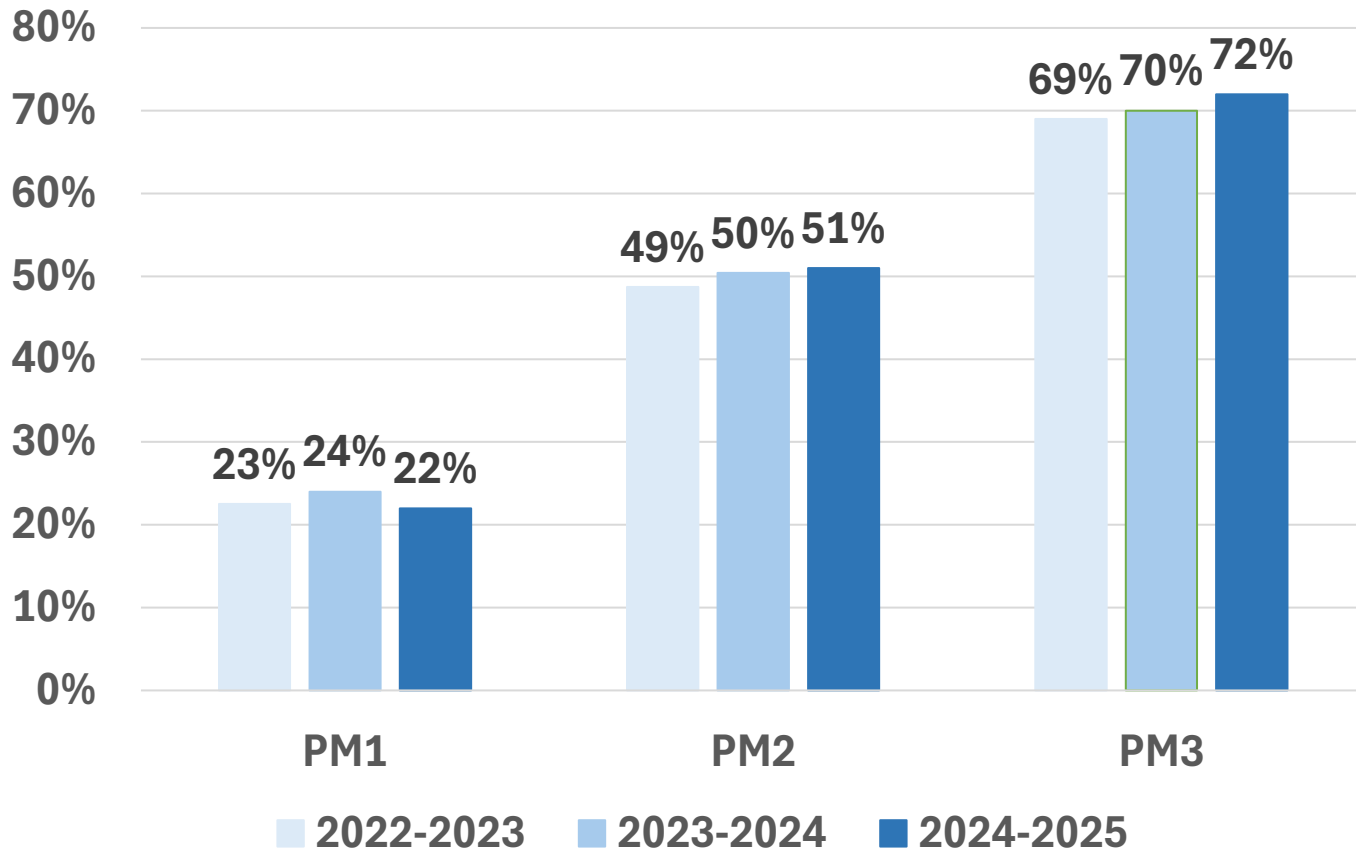
FAST Star Early Literacy for VPK

The Coordinated Screening and Progress Monitoring Program is the statewide, standardized program known as Florida Assessment of Student Thinking (FAST) or FAST Star Early Literacy implemented in all VPK programs.

- **Why are we implementing FAST Star Early Literacy?**
 - To monitor VPK student achievement of the performance standards in early literacy and mathematics.
 - Use results to inform targeted instruction.
- **What is assessed?**
 - 27 total items – 22 early literacy items and 5 numeracy items
 - 10-key early literacy sub-domains: Visual Discrimination, Alphabetic Principle, Concept of Word, Phonemic Awareness, Phonics, Structural Analysis, Vocabulary, Sentence-Level Comprehension, Paragraph-Level Comprehension, Early Numeracy
- **When are the students assessed?**
 - Three progress monitoring (PM) periods for the school year program (PM1, PM2, PM3) and two for the summer program (PM1 and PM3).
- **How long does it take?**
 - 10-20 minutes is the average progress monitoring length.

2024-2025 VPK FAST Star Early Literacy Overall Results

All Tested VPK Completers (Combined) Percent Scoring “Kindergarten Ready” and Above



Credentials & Training Requirements for VPK Personnel

- **VPK Director:**

- **Child Development Associate (CDA) (or various college degrees) – which is needed to obtain the DCF Florida Director Credential + training requirements:**
 - Implementing the Florida Standards in Preschool Classrooms: 3 Years Old to Kindergarten (online VFSP or instructor-led SPC3TK)
 - Emergent Literacy for VPK Instructors (VPK, VPKR or VPK21)
 - Mathematical Thinking for Early Learners (MATH)
 - Language and Vocabulary in the VPK Classroom (LVPK or LVPK21)
 - VPK Director Credential Course (DVPK)

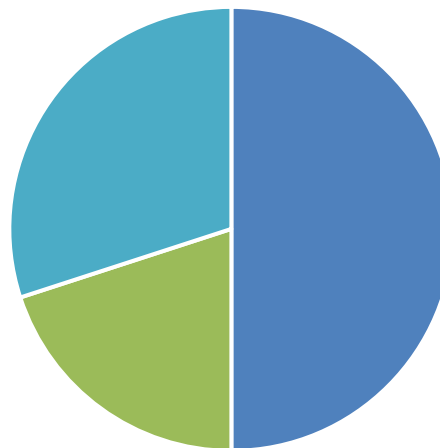
- **VPK Instructors:**

- **CDA (or various college degrees) to meet staff credential from DCF + training requirements:**
 - Emergent Literacy Training
 - Three 5-hour courses with additional training required every five (5) years
 - Performance Standards Training
 - 5 hours online or 3 hours instructor-led course on the most current early learning and developmental standards

New VPK Accountability System

A provider's performance metric is made up of three components:

- 50% Program Quality
- 20% Student Achievement
- 30% Student Learning Gains



Ranges	Designations
61 – 100 points	Excellent
46 – 60 points	Above Expectations
28 – 45 points	Meets Expectations
16 – 27 points	Below Expectations
0 – 15 points	Unsatisfactory

2024-2025 VPK Provider Designation Results (School-Year)

6,095 providers earned a designation or an incomplete status for the 2024-2025 school year, with the following overall results:

- **88%** of providers met or exceeded expectations.
- **7%** of providers did not meet expectations and are placed on probation.
- **5%** of providers received an incomplete status.

Performance Metric Ranges – 2024-2025 School Year Programs

Designations	Performance Metric Range	# Providers	% Providers	Average CLASS	Average Achievement	Average % of Children Meeting Achievement	Average Monthly Learning Gains	Average % of Children Meeting Learning Gains Criteria
Unsatisfactory	0 - 15	43	0.71%	4.46	651	16	3	7
Below Expectations	16 - 27	357	5.86%	4.63	689	38	6	19
Meets Expectations	28 - 45	1,458	23.92%	4.99	724	59	10	35
Above Expectations	46 - 60	1,906	31.27%	5.28	762	75	14	57
Excellent	61 - 100	2,026	33.24%	5.72	809	88	21	78
Incomplete	N/A	305	5.00%	5.18	763.0	N/A	15	N/A

2024-2025 VPK Provider Designation Results (Summer)

145 providers earned a designation or an incomplete status for the 2024-2025 school year, with the following overall results:

- **76%** of providers met or exceeded expectations.
- **11%** of providers did not meet expectations and are placed on probation.
- **13%** of providers received an incomplete status.

Performance Metric Ranges – 2024-2025 Summer Programs

Designations	Performance Metric Range	# Providers	% Providers	Average CLASS	Average Achievement	Average % of Children Meeting Achievement	Average Monthly Learning Gains	Average % of Children Meeting Learning Gains Criteria
Unsatisfactory	0 - 15	0	0.00%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Below Expectations	16 - 27	16	11.03%	4.63	674	35%	10	20%
Meets Expectations	28 - 45	35	24.14%	5.13	707	51%	24	37%
Above Expectations	46 - 60	35	24.14%	5.48	742	62%	45	52%
Excellent	61 - 100	40	27.59%	5.78	787	79%	79	76%
Incomplete	N/A	19	13.10%	5.19	731.0	N/A	47	N/A

Providers on Probation (POPs)

VPK providers who earn a designation of Below Expectations or Unsatisfactory for a program type (school-year or summer) must be placed on probation. POPs must develop and complete a coalition-approved improvement plan each year they are on probation.



Approved
Curriculum



Staff
Development



Communication
Plan



Improvement Plan

VPK Accountability Resources



**VPK Metrics and Designations
Calculation Guide and FAQs**

**VPK Providers on Probation and
Incomplete Provider Guide and FAQs**



Approved VPK Curriculum List



Discussion

School Readiness (SR) Program

2025-2026 SR Budget: \$1.12 billion

- Funded primarily through the Child Care and Development Block Grant.
- Created in 1999.
- Offers child care assistance to income-eligible families for early education and care so they can become economically self-sufficient.
- Serves children ages birth through 13, who are in economically disadvantaged working families, have special needs, are at risk or whose parents participate in Workforce/Education services.

Income Eligibility: For entry, family income must be at or below 55% State Median Income (SMI); to remain, income must be at or below 85% SMI.

Purpose:

- Help families become economically self-sufficient.
- Involve parents as their child's first teacher.
- Serve as a preventive measure for children at risk of future school failure.
- Enhance the educational readiness of eligible children.

SR Provider Eligibility

Types of private providers eligible to offer SR:

- Licensed child care facilities
- Licensed or registered family day care homes
- Large family child care homes
- Public or non-public schools
- Faith-based providers
- Before-school or after-school programs

Program providers must meet specific requirements:

- Age-appropriate instruction and activities
- DEL-approved curriculum
- Program assessment: CLASS, with minimum score for contracting
- Child developmental screenings
- Required trainings

SR Screening, Assessments and Accountability

Developmental Screening

- Children 6 weeks to 5 years must receive an annual developmental screening.
 - Ages & Stages Questionnaires®, Third Edition (ASQ®-3) is required.

Program Assessment

- SR providers must have an annual CLASS program assessment and meet a minimum threshold of a 4.00 to contract with the ELC.
- 50% of classrooms at each care level (birth to age 5) must be assessed.
- SR providers who score below the contract minimum may pay for an additional assessment.
- ELCs are responsible for administration of CLASS by qualified individuals.

Child Assessment

- Providers may voluntarily implement child assessments (Teaching Strategies Gold) for children birth to 5 and are incentivized with a differential payment.

SR Required Inspections and Trainings

Health and Safety Inspections

- All providers must have a fully compliant Health and Safety inspection conducted by DCF prior to contracting.
- After contracting, all providers must have an annual Health and Safety inspection.

Health and Safety Training

- Provider child care personnel must complete with a passing score these Health and Safety courses within 90 days of employment:
 - Child Development
 - Health and Nutrition
 - Safe Sleep Practices (not required for school-age)
 - Safety Practices
 - Transportation Safety (if applicable)



Discussion

Expand VPK and Offer SR

VPK

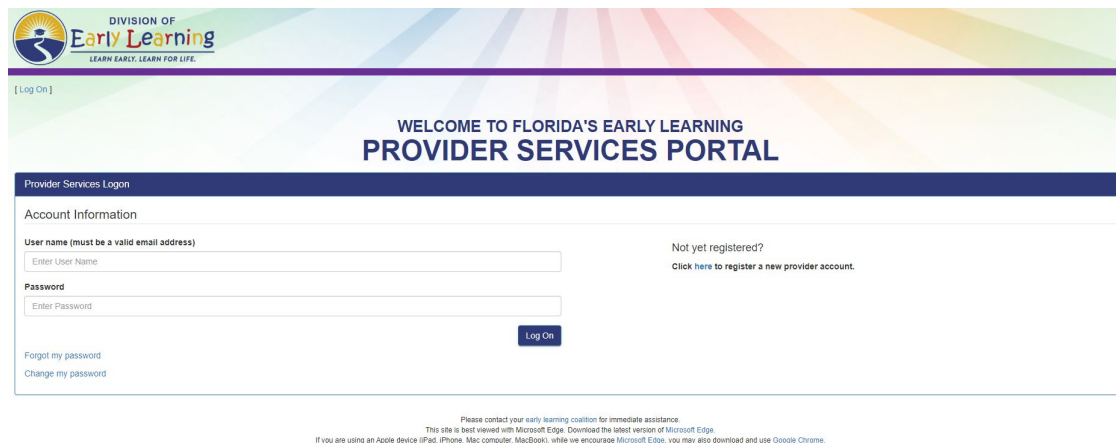
- The DEL partnered with the University of Florida Anita Zucker Center for Excellence in Early Childhood Studies to examine families' choices related to enrollment in VPK.
- This examination described factors, as indicated by families, that influenced their enrollment decisions for the 2022-2023 VPK program year.
- **Major Findings:**
 - Of those that enrolled in VPK, 75% preferred a private provider.
 - Of families who did not enroll, 46% preferred a public school setting.

SR

- Offer SR to support working families with child care.

How Do I Become a VPK Provider?

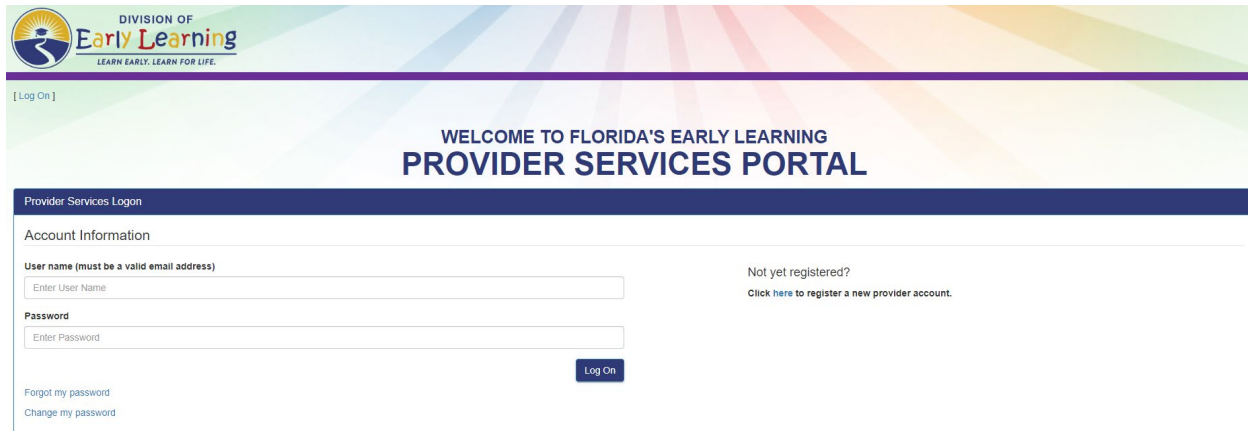
- Providers apply to offer VPK and contract annually with the ELC, using the Statewide VPK Provider Contract (Forms DEL-VPK 20 and DEL-VPK 20PS or DEL-VPK 20PP, as applicable) through the Provider Portal.
- Create account and profile in [Florida's Early Learning Provider Services Portal](#) (Provider Portal).
- Complete VPK application in Provider Portal and upload required documentation.
- Upon coalition approval, complete VPK contract in Provider Portal.



The screenshot shows the login page for the Florida's Early Learning Provider Services Portal. At the top left is the logo for the Division of Early Learning with the tagline "LEARN EARLY. LEARN FOR LIFE." Below the logo is a "[Log On]" link. The main heading reads "WELCOME TO FLORIDA'S EARLY LEARNING PROVIDER SERVICES PORTAL". Below this is a "Provider Services Logon" section. It contains an "Account Information" box with fields for "User name (must be a valid email address)" and "Password", each with a "Enter" placeholder. To the right of these fields is a link for "Not yet registered? Click here to register a new provider account." Below the password field is a "Log On" button. At the bottom left of the login section are links for "Forgot my password" and "Change my password". At the very bottom of the page, there is a small disclaimer: "Please contact your early learning coalition for immediate assistance. This site is best viewed with Microsoft Edge. Download the latest version of Microsoft Edge. If you are using an Apple device (iPad, iPhone, Mac computer, MacBook), while we encourage Microsoft Edge, you may also download and use Google Chrome."

How Do I Become a SR Provider?

- Providers who want to participate in the **School Readiness Program** must execute a **Statewide School Readiness Provider Contract** with their local **ELCs**.
- Following contract execution, SR providers must submit child attendance for enrolled school readiness children monthly through the Provider Portal to receive reimbursement.



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Please contact your early learning coalition for immediate assistance.
This site is best viewed with Microsoft Edge. Download the latest version of Microsoft Edge.
If you are using an Apple device (iPad, iPhone, Mac computer, MacBook), while we encourage Microsoft Edge, you may also download and use Google Chrome.

How Do Families Apply for VPK and/or SR?

- Families apply for VPK and/or SR through Florida's Early Learning Family Portal at <https://familyservices.floridaeearlylearning.com/>.

WELCOME TO FLORIDA'S EARLY LEARNING FAMILY PORTAL

You will find information here about Florida's early learning programs. You can also apply for School Readiness (child care assistance) and Voluntary Prekindergarten Education services online by clicking on an Apply for button below.



Resource & Referral	School Readiness	VPK
Florida's Child Care Resource and Referral Network or CCR&R helps families locate quality child care and early education programs. Parental responsibilities after information about local child care options and benefits. Continued help of child care providers based on each family's specific child care needs. Financial assistance strategies and referrals to other community resources and programs are also available.	Florida's School Readiness Program or SR offers financial assistance to eligible low-income families for early education and care so they can become financially self-sufficient and their young children can be successful in school in the future. Services vary based on individual needs and range from extended day care to after school and school-age care in some instances.	Florida's Voluntary Prekindergarten Education Program or VPK is a free educational program that prepares 4-year-olds for kindergarten and beyond. Children must live in Florida and be 4 or under September 1st of the school year they attend. Parents can choose from private child care centers or public schools and school-age or summer programs. Parents of 4-year-olds with special needs have an option outside the classroom setting - VPK Specialized Instructional Services (VPK-SIS).
Learn More About CCR&R	Apply for School Readiness	Apply for Voluntary Prekindergarten

Already have a Family Portal account? Sign in [here](#).

Please contact your early learning coordinator for enrollment assistance.



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