

## How Young Children Learn

When children's bodies touch an object, they learn how it works and remember. When children have hands-on activities, all parts of the brain are being used at the same time. In a good VPK program, **PLAY** is important. Play allows young children to grow and learn. It teaches them to make decisions and choices, take risks, and become independent. Children find out facts by playing with toys.

- Children learn to get along with each other.
- Children learn self control.
- Children are taught to feel good about themselves.
- Children are loved and nurtured.
- All cultures are respected and included.



## A Quality VPK Program

A high quality VPK Program is a place that meets a child's needs and interests. Recent brain research shows that loving and caring teachers are important. Every day children should have a many experiences that helps them learn ideas, facts, and language . They will find out how to be creative. They will learn how to take care of themselves. All experiences during the early years can affect brain development and the effects will last a lifetime.

### VPK Requirements

1. One teacher for every 10 children.
2. No more than 18 children in a class.
3. The lead teacher must have a National or Florida Child Development Associate Certificate or a college degree.
4. 540 hours or 300 hours in the summer.
5. Look at the licensing inspection reports in the center. Go to [www.myflorida.com/childcare](http://www.myflorida.com/childcare) to check.
6. Look for accreditation or a waiver.
7. Teacher has 5 hour VPK literacy

Visit these websites for information on VPK:

[www.vpkflorida.com](http://www.vpkflorida.com)

[www.qualityprek.org](http://www.qualityprek.org)

[www.ecaoffl.org](http://www.ecaoffl.org)



*The mission of the Early Childhood Association of Florida is to promote the quality of life, learning, and care of young children and their families through leadership, advocacy, and professional development of its members.*

## Choosing a Quality Florida Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten (VPK) Program



Coalition information

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# STOP

## Stop to ask questions!

- What is the discipline policy?
- How are the children taught?
- How many children are together for hours before or after VPK?
- How long have the teachers been teaching at the school?
- Can parents come visit at any time?
- Do children sit in group time for more than 20 minutes?
- How long do children play in learning centers each day?
- How many stories are read to the children each day?
- What other literacy activities are offered?
- How often do the teachers talk with families about their child?



# LOOK

## Look everywhere!

- Look for posted schedules, nutritious snacks, and meals.
- Look for daily lesson plans in every room.
- Is the entire place clean? Do bathrooms smell pleasant?
- Are there lots of toys and books?
- Can the children get the toys and books by themselves?
- Do the teachers talk and play with the children inside and outside?
- Do the children and teachers look happy and smile often?
- Look for teachers listening to each child.
- Are the children given a choice of activities and do they move around freely?
- Do you see paper, crayons, markers, pencils, and scissors where children can reach them?
- Can children paint or play with playdough every day?
- Do teachers redirect children's behavior.
- Do teachers touch children gently?

# LISTEN

## Do you hear pleasant sounds?

- Listen for children's happy voices.
- Do you hear kind, gentle teacher voices?
- Listen for teachers using positive words like "Yes", "You tried hard", or "Aren't you proud?"
- Do you hear children and teachers talking about what they are doing?
- Listen for music and singing.
- Listen for stories and counting games.
- Do you hear questions that help children think?

