

What is VPK

The Voluntary Prekindergarten Education Program – or VPK – is a free prekindergarten program for 4 and 5-year-olds who reside in Florida. Participating children must be 4 year of age on or before September 1. Parents can enroll their child in the state’s free, voluntary prekindergarten (VPK) education program that year or wait until the following year when their child is 5.

Benefits of early education and the VPK program

- The most important growth and development in the brain happens by the age of five.
- The early years are the learning years. A child’s ability to be attentive and to follow directions emerges in the early years. Structured early learning fosters these abilities for later success in school and in life.
- Pre-K prepares children to be ready for school. Children who participate in high-quality early childhood education programs develop better language skills, score higher in school-readiness tests and have better social skills and fewer behavioral problems once they enter school. They are also better prepared for Kindergarten, especially in the areas of pre-reading, pre-math and social skills.
- Pre-K promotes a love of learning in children. Pre-K enhances what a child learns at home and instills a love of life-long learning.

Highlights of the VPK Program

FREE for all children who live in Florida

- No registration fee
- Parents may choose a participating private child care or public school provider
- Early language and literacy focus

Curriculum

- Focuses on reading, writing and social skills
- Prepares children to be ready for Kindergarten

VPK Program Options

- Option 1: school-year **VPK** – 540 instructional hours.
- Option 2: summer **VPK** – 300 instructional hours.

VPK Providers

- Parents have the option of choosing the provider that meets their own family's needs
- Options include: private and faith-based child care centers, private and public schools and licensed family child care homes
- All VPK providers must meet high standards required by law

Instructors

- Ratios are 1 instructor to 11 children
- Class size will not exceed 20 children in the school-year program, and will not exceed 12 children for the summer program
- All **VPK** instructors must have a minimum of a child development associate for the school-year program, or a bachelor's degree in early childhood or related fields for the summer program, [click here](#) for summer **VPK** instructor requirements.

Transportation

Parents are responsible for their child's transportation

VPK legislation was signed into law by Governor Jeb Bush on January 2, 2005. This law created a program to prepare every Florida four-year-old for Kindergarten and to build a strong foundation for their continued educational success.

The **VPK** program will better prepare Florida's young children for a successful Kindergarten experience by focusing the Department of Education's efforts on early literacy. This legislation assigns

responsibilities for the day-to-day management of the program to the Office of Early Learning (OEL); licensing and credentialing to the Department of Children and Families (DCF); and the creation of standards, curriculum, and accountability to the Department of Education (DOE). All three agencies are working together to provide leadership and support to the local early learning coalitions, school districts, and public and private providers to ensure the successful implementation of effective prekindergarten education programs for Florida's four-year-old children.