

VPK Newsletter

Early Learning Coalition of Florida's Gateway

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Windows of Opportunity

The following is taken from the DCF Behavioral Observation and Screening in Child Care 6 hour course:

A few years ago, some researchers tried an interesting experiment. They took healthy newborn kittens and on each they sutured one eyelid shut, being careful not to damage the eye itself. After several weeks, they removed the sutures and reopened the eyelids.

What do you think happened, if anything to the kitten's eyesight?

In newborn kittens, sight is one of the first senses to

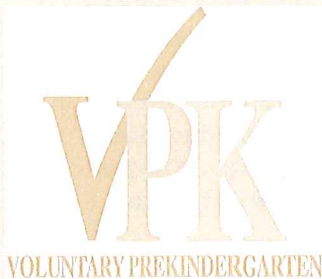
fully develop. There was an early "window of opportunity" during which the kittens' brains developed the connections to receive and make sense of input from the eyes. In each case, the open eye transmitted stimuli to the brain, and the brain made the necessary connections.

The closed eye did not transmit any signals and after awhile the visual pathways stopped developing. Even though the formerly closed eye started transmitting visual signals after being reopened, the brain had already "moved on" in development. The window of opportunity

had closed, and each kitten was forever blind in one eye.

Development in the human brain progresses in the same fashion. Infants are born with billions of unassigned brain cells, but without all of the synaptic connections necessary to make sense of the world and to learn to perform the full spectrum of skills that characterize human beings. Young children, like the kittens, also have "windows of opportunity" during which the development of specialized connections is favored.

Keep those "Windows" open!



VPK Instructional Strategy

What a great time to conduct height and weight assessments on your children. If you need the tools to do this, just ask your parents, someone is always willing to give a scale away. Make sure you chart and discuss the results with your class.

Art Experiences in the VPK Classroom

Art in the VPK classroom should reflect each child's imagination and creativity. Ideally, art displayed throughout the classroom should not be similar. Children are on different developmental levels and

have different interests. One child might enjoy painting and wants to paint all the time, another might enjoy creating with collage materials and still another might just want to draw. When children create on

their own, the "masterpiece" has more meaning to the child. With the holidays right around the corner—read books, bring real experiences to the classroom. For example: Your theme is "Fall". (Continued pg. 2)

Art Experiences in the VPK Classroom (Continued from cover)

How can teachers ensure their students are understanding the theme as well as using their creativity and understanding?

Exposing children to many different books about fall is, of course, a must. Don't forget to bring the old cookbooks in with pumpkin, mincemeat (vocabulary) and pecan pie recipes. Children are asked to bring leaves from home (parent involvement), focus

on fall colored paints (red, yellow, brown, orange, green), same with markers, paper, and collage items. Bring pumpkins in or go to a pumpkin patch on a field trip. Discuss the temperature changes. What clothes do we wear in the fall? What do animals do to prepare for winter? Children will begin to get a concept of your theme. Give them the direction to create their favorite thing about fall. Don't worry if

they think about it for a while, or if it doesn't reflect your theme at all. Remember, it is the process not the end product that is important and with time you will see these skills improve. It is crucial that children have these open art opportunities throughout the classroom during the day. Children need these times to improve the strength in their creativity and imagination skills.



If you have to cut it, model it, redecorate it, then it isn't true preschool art.

Aspirational Goals

"Do I have to have a 2 or 4 year degree in early childhood or child development to be a VPK Instructor?"

This is probably one of the most often asked questions regarding VPK. The answer is "No" for now. According to the 2010 Florida Statutes 1002.65 the Legislature recognizes that there is a strong relationship between the skills and preparation of prekindergarten instructors and the educational outcomes of students in the VPK Program.

The law further states that the Legislature intends that all VPK instructors will

continue to improve their skills and preparation through education and training, so that the following aspirational goals will be achieved:

1. By 2010-2011 each VPK class will have at least one instructor with an associates or higher degree and
2. By 2013-2014 each VPK class will have at least one instructor who

holds a bachelor's or higher degree in the field of early childhood education or child development.

It is always important to move forward with your education. If you are working for a School Readiness Provider in our five counties, you may be eligible for our wonderful educational scholarships. Contact us to find out more.

2010 - 2011 VPK Monitoring

Monitoring will begin soon. A few things to remember:

- VPK attendance policy is up-to-date and you can show evidence that parents have been notified of this policy.
- Parental Choice Attendance Verification forms
- Lesson plans reflect the 2008 VPK Standards and teachers are following these plans
- Certificates of Eligibility are in order
- Daily sign-in sheets

reflect every child in the VPK classroom and are accounted for

- VPK paperwork reflects the classroom
- Credentials/ Background Screens are up-to-date and submitted to the Coalition.



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