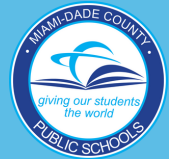




# PRE-K NEWS



Monthly Newsletter for DECP VPK Programs

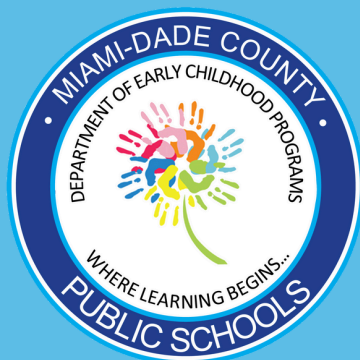
## HIGHLIGHTS & UPDATES

### PAGE 1

- Creativity: The Heart of Learning
- Early Childhood Programs--Teacher Spotlight
- Celebration of the Hands

### PAGE 2

- VPK Lottery Procedures
- Fingerplay Corner
- Celebrating Black History Month
- PMP Conferences and Next Steps
- Kindergarten Rocks and ENROLLS
- MARCHing into ECHOS
- February Waterford Learning Together Calendar



## CREATIVITY IS THE HEART OF LEARNING



In the VPK program, creativity is a powerful tool that helps children grow both intellectually and emotionally. By engaging in imaginative play and creative projects, children learn to think outside the box and develop problem-solving skills. This process, guided by the love and support of their teachers, nurtures their hearts, allowing them to form meaningful relationships and discover the joy of learning in a safe, encouraging environment. How do you embrace student expression in your classroom? Remember, child-centered experiences help with language development, student autonomy, and building critical thinking skills. When children know that their ideas can be explored and that their mistakes are just an opportunity to try again but with a new solution.

### Early Childhood Programs--Teacher Spotlight



**Merida Morales**  
Fairlawn  
Elementary

Ms. Merida-Morales is an exceptional VPK teacher whose passion, organization, and creativity shine through in every aspect of her teaching. She is dedicated to enriching each lesson with thoughtful planning to engage and inspire all her students. With her remarkable strategies, she skillfully supports students who need extra guidance, ensuring that every child feels valued and capable. She fosters emotional and instructional growth by being inquisitive, encouraging her students to explore, question, and express themselves. Through her promotion of creativity and independence, she empowers her students to thrive in and beyond the classroom.



### Celebration of the Hands 2025

Children's Week Florida is the largest event held in the state that celebrates and honors its commitment to children, youth, and advocates and is scheduled for the week of April 13-18. See below for directions for how to connect the hands. We would love to have as much participation from MDCPS so that our creative representation is showcased at our state's capital building.

[Click here for Hand Directions](#)



Deadline for Submission—February 24th



**NEW LOTTERY PROCESS FOR THE 2025-2026 SCHOOL YEAR!**

Miami-Dade County Public Schools will begin accepting 2025-2026 VPK applications beginning on January 21, 2025. Applications will be accepted through March 7, 2025. This year, all VPK lottery applications will be **exclusively accepted online** via the M-DCPS Parent Portal. Families will need to sign into the M-DCPS Parent Portal using their Google or Apple ID, regardless of whether they have a child currently enrolled in one of our schools. More information and flyers are forthcoming.

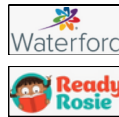
**Tips:**

- Designate a staff member to support parents who come to register their child at your school site.
- Make sure to have parents begin the application process at the school site.

**Weekly Briefing #46622**

**PM2 Parent Conferences**

Many of you have already started your PM2 Parent Conferences. The [VPK Parent Report and Conference Log](#) is a required document that needs to be completed during PM1, PM2, and PM3. Before meeting with families, check each child's Waterford data and usage. This information can be used to encourage Home Access and the use of the Learning Together monthly calendar. Finally, don't forget to include, [VPK Families](#), a one-pager with strategies and resources to support families during the parent conferences.



**PMP Requirements and Next Steps**

As communicated through [Weekly Briefing # 45384](#), beginning this school year, all VPK students who score below the 24th percentile on the FAST Star Early Literacy PM2 assessment, must have a Progress Monitoring Plan (PMP) developed within 45 days of the assessment. The Early Focus training the importance of early intervention and the need to provide targeted support to students whose data for PM2 is in the **Yellow** or in the **Red**. For these students, a PMP must be implemented.



**Click Here for PMP Deadline Dates**

**Kindergarten Rocks and Enrolls**

Can you believe it's almost time for your little ones to go to Kindergarten? The end of February, begins Transition to Kindergarten Month which runs through the month of March. [Weekly Briefing # 46741](#) provides a wide variety of activities and resources to help you support TTK efforts at your school. Plan a visit to a Kindergarten classroom at your school and then create a graphic organizer that compares what they saw in happening in Kindergarten to what happens during the day in their VPK classroom.



**MARCHing Into ECHOS**



**ECHOS Implementation Support**

- CSS visits: organizing materials and how to implement lessons.
- Talk-O Tuesday Sessions with your CSS
- Afterschool Session with our ECHOS support liaison
- March Pre-K News will focus on ECHOS Best Practices



**Waterford**

Learning Together Calendar



**Click to Download for Families**

[English PDF](#)  
[Spanish PDF](#)



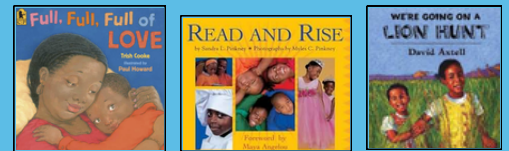
**Fingerplay Corner**  
**There's a Big Red Heart**

Tune: "It's a Small World"

- There's a big red heart inside of me.**  
*(Draw a heart shape in the air, then point to chest)*
- There's a big heart no one else can see.**  
*(Cover eyes with hands)*
- It is filled to the brim with love from within.**  
*(Spread arms)*
- And now I give it to you.**  
*(Point to another person)*

**Celebrating Black History Month**

Below is a collection of books that will help your students learn about diversity and see beyond their own world. By celebrating differences, children learn how to recognize and appreciate individual uniqueness and empower them to make this world a better place.



- **Full, Full, Full of Love** by Trish Cooke
- **Feast for 10** by Cathryn Falwell
- **Peter's Chair** by Ezra Jack Keats
- **Lola at the Library** by Anna McQuinn
- **Read and Rise** by Sandra Pinkney
- **We're Going on a Lion Hunt** by David Axtell

**DECP**

**Administrative Staff**

- Lisette Alves**, Assistant Superintendent
- Lynn Maceyras**, Administrative Director
- Dina Westberg**, VPK Executive Director
- Judy Palenzuela**, Director of Community Outreach VPK/Transition to Kindergarten
- Patricia Ortega**, Head Start/Early Head Start District Director
- Javonie Wilcox**, Pre-K Network Executive Director

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