



Family Engagement:

Promising Practices Spotlight Series

FLORIDA OFFICE OF EARLY LEARNING'S VROOM FOR FAMILIES PROGRAM

Florida's Office of Early Learning (OEL) is the state Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) network that works with 30 local Early Learning Coalitions (ELCs) to deliver comprehensive early learning services statewide. A key function of their work is to engage families around the development and well-being of their children. Florida's OEL also administers the state's School Readiness program and the Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten program. The Vroom for Families initiative is a natural fit for their work with families and child care providers to promote children's school readiness and life-long success. In January of 2016, Florida's OEL was excited to be selected as a Child Care Aware® of America Vroom Ambassador grantee.

What is Vroom for Families?

A baby's brain starts off with billions of neurons and is wired to grow at birth! During a child's earliest years, their brain makes 1 million neural connections every single second. Vroom for Families supports relationship-based interactions between children and their caregivers, in order to build strong brains. That means positive caregivers in the child's life are often their #1 brain builders!

How has Florida Implemented Vroom?

Florida's OEL has taken various approaches to implementing Vroom for Families as a family and community engagement program. They began by

distributing the materials to all 30 Early Learning Coalitions across the state, the Redlands Christian Migrant Association (RCMA) and the Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Children (HIPPIY). They also provided professional development opportunities about Vroom and Mind in the Making Facilitator Training for the ELCs and other partners to help prepare and provide them with important brain-building science information to share with families, early childhood providers and community partners. Recently, they introduced a Vroom Texting pilot program for families in Florida. The texting program allows any family member to sign up to get Vroom tips on their smartphones or mobile devices. This encourages everyone in the family to play a part in a child's learning and development.

Below are examples of how they got the word out on this initiative:

Early Learning Councils Share Vroom with Families

Vroom for Families has helped to create a bond between the staff at the ELCs and families who come in for appointments. Many of the ELCs have Vroom videos playing on screens in their waiting areas for families to view when they arrive for their appointments. The parents watch the videos that contain some of the tips and information about child development. The CCR&R

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staff ask the parents about the videos as a way to introduce Vroom and offer developmental screenings for the families' children. They also share brain-building tips with the families to use with their young children and teach them how to access the Vroom app. Many families have expressed appreciation for the materials and information on the app because it is so easy to use.

Incorporating Vroom into Early Learning Standards and Family Resources

Florida's OEL recently revised the Florida Early Learning and Developmental Standards and obtained permission from the Bezos Family Foundation to align some of the Vroom tips with the standards. Their new website includes Vroom tips when you search the standards by domain and/or age. They have also included Vroom tips on their family's page when you search for activity ideas by age. Florida's OEL recently updated their First Teacher Books aligning them with the new standards. There are a total of six books designed for families who have infants, toddlers or preschoolers. Each book is written in family-friendly language, shares information about child development and milestones and provides activity ideas. These books promote Vroom as a way for parents to get more tips and activity ideas to support their child's learning and healthy development.

Community Partners as Instrumental Pieces of the Vroom Implementation

OEL's community partners have been instrumental in spreading Vroom to families throughout the state. OEL has presentations and materials available to all who ask for information about Vroom and offers presentations to any group that requests more information. The Florida Family Court System, Early Steps, Guardian Ad Litem Program and the State of Florida Library System are some examples of the partners that use the Vroom materials with families.

OEL shared the science behind Vroom with medical experts within their state including the Surgeon General of Florida, Celeste Phillip, MD, MPH. Pediatricians and hospitals that provide training for expectant and new mothers have used Vroom resources in their work with families. Several schools that have teenage parent programs use the Vroom materials to help these young parents learn about child development and find ways to interact positively with their new babies.

Florida's family courts staff have been impressed with the science behind Vroom and have requested Vroom materials to share with families. The family courts system has even highlighted Vroom in their monthly newsletter resulting in some of their judges recommending the Vroom app to parents who appear before them.

Next Steps with Vroom

Florida plans to continue to embed Vroom for families into natural settings in the communities where families with young children live and work. They will seek out additional community partners, state agencies and local businesses to help them spread the word. Currently, they are in the process of revising OEL's Family Guide to Choosing Quality Child Care as well as the Child Care Quality Checklist to include information about Vroom tips.

LEARN MORE

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