

Foundations for Early Learning Program

Supporting the social-emotional development and early language and literacy of children ages birth through 6 years.

What happens during the early years helps to ensure that children are ready to learn when they enter school. We know that children begin learning the skills needed to speak, read and get along with other children when they are very young. To improve early learning practices and to enhance knowledge and skills, Vermont developed the Foundations of Early Learning (FEL) Program. This program enables early childhood professionals and families to better address the social-emotional development and language and literacy needs of young children, including those who may have a developmental delay or special need.

To accomplish its goal, FEL draws on the expertise of two nationally recognized programs—the Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning (www.vanderbilt.edu/csefel/) and the Center for Early Literacy Learning (www.earlyliteracylearning.org) to train professionals and educate families throughout Vermont. FEL is preparing a core group of individuals to assist early childhood providers and families to implement practices developed by these national centers. Currently early childhood programs in several Vermont counties are participating as model sites for the project. As a result of the FEL program, Vermonters should expect to see improvements in early childhood care and education over time.

Involving parents

FEL addresses the vital role that families play in their young child's life by including activities to encourage and sustain parent involvement. Each early childhood program participating in FEL has information and materials to share with parents. You can learn, for example, different ways to nurture your youngster's social-emotional development as well as identify activities that build listening, talking and learning skills. If you prefer information on line, however, the national center websites listed above contain fact sheets and other resources geared specifically for parents of infants, toddlers and preschoolers. Although young children with special needs may require additional help, many of the

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activities described in these websites work for any child. For more information, contact your child's early childhood program, your local Parent Child Center or any of the following resources.

Early childhood resources

Foundations of Early Learning Program (FEL)

Kate Rogers, kate.rogers@state.vt.us, 802-828-5115

Maureen Sullivan, maureen.sullivan@uvm.edu, 802-241- 3602

The Vermont Department of Education and others are working closely with the Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning (CSEFEL) and the Center for Early Literacy Learning (CELL) to improve early childhood education, intervention and mental health. Foundations for Early Learning (FEL) includes a five year training program for Vermont's early childhood community that will support the social-emotional development and early language and literacy learning of infants, toddlers and preschoolers. To learn about events for parents in your community and for more information, you may also contact your local Parent Child Center.

Center for Early Literacy Learning (CELL)

www.earlyliteracylearning.org/

www.earlyliteracylearning.org/pgparents.php

The Center for Early Literacy Learning (CELL) provides information about researched-based early literacy learning practices. Information is geared to early childhood professionals, parents and other caregivers of children, birth to 5, including children with identified disabilities, developmental delays, and those at-risk. An entire section of the website is dedicated to activities you can do every day with your infant, toddler and preschooler.

Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations of Early Learning (CSEFL)

<http://csefel.vanderbilt.edu/>

<http://csefel.vanderbilt.edu/resources/family.html>

The Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning (CSEFEL) focuses on improving the social-emotional development and school readiness of young children, birth to 5. For parents, the site contains fact sheets that describe different stages of social-emotional development in infants, toddlers and preschoolers as well as tips for enhancing your child's development and skills.

Vermont Family Network (VFN)

802-876-5315, 800-800-4005.

www.vermontfamilynetwork.org/

Vermont Family Network is a statewide nonprofit family support organization that promotes better health, education and well-being for all children and families, with a focus on children and young adults with special needs. As a partner with the Foundations of Early Learning program, VFN is able to host parent meetings in your community. VFN staff also is available to answer questions and link you to community resources.

Children's Integrated Services Program (CIS)

<http://dcf.vermont.gov/cdd/cis>

Children's Integrated Services is a resource for pregnant women and families when they have questions or concerns about their child's development during pregnancy, infancy and early childhood, up to age 6. Within that program is the Children's Integrated Services-Early Intervention Program (CIS-EI.) The Early Intervention Program is a family-centered, coordinated system of services available to families of children birth to age three who have or may have a health

condition which could lead to a delay in development. To locate your local CIS team and obtain more information about services this program provides for your child and family call the referral service 2-1-1.

Early Education Pre-K Programs, Vermont Department of Education

Manuela Fonesca, Manuela.fonesca@state.vt.us, 802-828-3850

Vermont school districts may provide publicly funded prekindergarten (pre-K) education for 3-5 year olds. School districts may choose to establish partnerships with qualified early care and education programs; they may operate a pre-K program directly; or they may do both. Contact your local school district for information about pre-K programs in your community.

Early Childhood Special Education Programs, Vermont Department of Education

Kate Rogers, kate.rogers@state.vt.us, 802-828-5115

This statewide program coordinates early childhood special education services for children ages three through five. Services are administered by local school districts in cooperation with local early childhood service providers to ensure that children receive services in inclusive educational environments. Each school district is responsible for providing early childhood special education services. To learn more about this program, contact your elementary school or the superintendent's office.

Zero to Three

<http://www.zerotothree.org/>

<http://www.zerotothree.org/child-development/>

ZERO TO THREE is a national, nonprofit organization that contains a wealth of information for professionals, policymakers and parents in their efforts to improve the lives of infants and toddlers. Parents can search this website to learn more about specific stages of child's development, ways to support early learning and literacy and much more.

Mayo Clinic

www.mayoclinic.com/health/child-development/MY00136

This page provides a child development chart for children ages 2 through 5. The chart is useful in finding out how your child compares to other children his or her age. It includes milestones for language, social, cognitive and physical development. Remember that children grow and develop at their own pace. If you have questions or concerns, you can talk to your pediatrician, early childhood educator or care provider or other parents.

Child Development Institute

www.childdevelopmentinfo.com/development/language_development.shtml

You can review typical language development in children 6 months to 8 years old on this site. Included is a chart of typical milestones that children are expected to reach. Most children, however, will not reach every language milestone at the same time. Questions and concerns should be discussed with your pediatrician, early childhood educator or care provider or others.

Here are examples of activities for parents included in the FEL program.

Helping your child to develop language and literacy skills

- Sing songs, babble and coo with your baby. Make up nonsense rhymes.
- Play sound games through babbling and talking; repeat the sounds your baby makes.
- Look at picture books with your baby. Point to pictures and say the words.
- Encourage your toddler to talk about herself and to sing songs.
- Ask your toddler to tell you “stories” about his activities.
- Play games together that involve sound, rhyming and words.
- Help your toddler to explore different kinds of art and writing materials.
- Have conversations with your preschooler about things that happened in the past.
- Encourage your preschooler to invent stories and retell old stories.
- Provide opportunities for your preschooler child to work on art projects that involve writing.

Helping your child’s social-emotional development

- Help your baby to soothe herself. The calmer she feels, the more in control she will be.
- Give your toddler opportunities to make choices about what to play, what to read and what to have for snack.
- Develop routines with your young child, such as meal times, getting ready for bed, or taking a bath.
- Help your son to understand his emotions and feelings by teaching him the names of feelings and then encouraging him to tell you how he is feeling..
- Empathize with your child. Let him know that you understand how she feels.
- State clearly what you want your child to do when you make requests.



To order copies of this fact sheet, or to learn more about VFN’s materials and services, contact Vermont Family Network (VFN), 600 Blair Park Road, Suite 240, Williston, VT 05495 1-800-800-4005 You can also contact us via email at info@vtfn.org. And don’t forget to visit our website at www.vtfn.org.

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