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NEWS RELEASE  
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## **ECSD Title I Office Offers Help with VPK Application Process** *The First Day of School is Closer Than You Think*

Pensacola, FL: Will a child in your family turn four on or before Sept. 1, 2016? If so, it is time to start the application process for Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten. The first step of the process includes applying for a Certificate of Eligibility (COE) from the State of Florida, and that involves scanning and submitting various documents and then waiting for email confirmation. Confirmation of your eligibility usually takes about a week. Parents will need to print that certificate to have when they then enroll their child in a VPK program.

For those who do not have easy access to a scanner, the internet, a computer and a printer, the Escambia County School District's Title I VPK staff is standing by, ready to help.

"The goal of VPK is serve students by providing age appropriate opportunities and learning experiences, which provide a firm foundation for kindergarten readiness," explains Melanie Perritt, the Coordinator for the Title I Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten Program in Escambia County's School District. "ECSD has VPK available on 14 of our school campuses, and there are also 57 private providers of VPK in our county. We all believe that a year in VPK is the best gift you could give your future kindergartner, and we want to help you with the application process."

The Title I office is located at the Spencer Bibbs Center at 2005 N. 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue in Pensacola, FL, 32503. Their phone number is 850-595-6915, ext. 224 or 277. The staff has computers and scanners and they will be glad to assist with the online eligibility registration process. Should a parent already have access to that equipment, they may go directly to the registration site at <http://Familyservices.floridaearlylearning.com> and then pick up the directions below at Step Two. To have a student start VPK in August, when school starts, there are two steps.

Step One: Parents, or guardians, will need to (1) already have, or set up, an email address so the State can respond to their application electronically; (2) they will need to scan and submit the student's official Birth Certificate, and (3) scan and submit Proof of Residency (ex. their most recent utility/power bill). These scanned documents will be needed to apply online for the child's Certificate of Eligibility (COE). The State will send the parent an email when the COE is ready. If a parent does not have a printer, the staff at the Title I office is available to help them print the COE. Should eligibility be declined, the Title One VPK staff can also help the parent determine why eligibility was declined, and then assist them in resubmitting, if appropriate.

Step two: After the parent receives and prints the Certificate of Eligibility (COE), he or she must gather:

The printed COE,

The child's birth certificate,

Their most recent proof of residency (Bring a utility bill less than 60 days old),

AND

Their child's immunization record,

Their child's school physical form completed by a doctor from an appointment within one year of this year's school starting day (so the appointment must have been after August 10, 2015).

Once a parent or guardian has all of those documents, the next step is to enroll in a VPK program.

**Enrollment in any of the school district's VPK sites will be handled at the Title I Office in the Spencer Bibbs Center (THIS IS NEW!!!!) To make this more convenient for parents living in the northern parts of the county, the ECSD schools located at the north end of the county offering VPK will continue to register/enroll their students at those schools. This includes families whose students will attend VPK at Bratt Elementary, Molino Park Elementary, and Jim Allen Elementary Schools.**

"This includes families who may have handled the application process on their own. To enroll in an ECSD school's VPK, you must come to our office, unless you live the north-end of the county," stated Perritt.

The Title One VPK staff will help families identify which location is the best fit based primarily on the family's address. Locations have limits on the number of students who can be enrolled there, so parents should not wait until the end of summer to complete this process.

"School based VPK is a full-day program. Students can ride to school on their neighborhood bus, just like older siblings," said Perritt. "For many families, matching an older sibling's schedule is most convenient, while for others, finding a private VPK provider close to home or work may be better. We want to help parents find the best location to ensure their child can have a successful VPK experience next year."

ECSD schools with Title I VPK programs include: Jim Allen Elementary School, Bratt Elementary School, Ensley Elementary School, Global Learning Academy, Lincoln Park Primary School, McMillan Community Learning Center, Molino Park Elementary School, Montclair Elementary School, Navy Point Elementary School, O.J. Semmes Elementary School, Sherwood Elementary School, Warrington Elementary School, C.A. Weis Elementary School, and West Pensacola Elementary School,

Those eligible for a private VPK program can sign up for three, free, hours per day. Families who need their child to stay longer will have to talk with the site's management to find out the cost involved for the rest of the day. Should it be more convenient for parents, they can also find similar assistance with the application process in the offices of the Escambia County Early Learning Coalition, located at 3300 N. Pace Blvd, Suite 210. Their staff can also provide information about the other 57 VPK providers. Their phone number is 850-607-8556.

"Again, what's most important is getting 4-year-olds into a pre-kindergarten program to give them a chance to be better prepared for Kindergarten when they are five." said Perritt. "Whether a parent

chooses to place their child in one of our school-based VPK programs or with another provider, for everyone this two-step application process several days. So, please do not wait long to come see us. Parents can call ahead for an appointment or just walk-in. We are ready to start helping parents now.”

Media queries about any event listed on this release should be directed to Kim Stefansson, at 850-469-6219 or [kstefansson@escambia.k12.fl.us](mailto:kstefansson@escambia.k12.fl.us).

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