

**ABSTRACT**  
**Partners in Education and Research for Kindergarten Success (PERKS)**  
**Children's Forum**

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In Florida, early education professionals are gearing up for the implementation of the first ever constitutionally mandated and state funded voluntary pre-kindergarten (VPK) system. Dedicated to developing a sustainable system of professional development for VPK teachers and ensuring the highest standards of care and education for young children, a partnership of early childhood professional leaders, including staff of the state network for resources and referral, two universities, the early childhood community college network, and 16 early learning coalitions has been formed. The Florida PERKS Project will provide professional development for VPK teachers on scientifically-valid preschool curricula through college coursework and onsite technical assistance in order to promote the school readiness of children in the areas of language and cognitive development, and early reading and early literacy skills.

Florida PERKS proposes three objectives –

1. Objective one is to increase the knowledge, skills and practices of 240 VPK teachers through comprehensive early childhood development coursework with specific course topics on curriculum and assessment;
2. Objective two is to test the effectiveness of varying intensity levels of technical assistance; and
3. Objective three is to enhance the outcomes of approximately 2400 children (based on VPK 1:10 ratios) through professional development and technical assistance provided to teachers. Evaluation will include use of a randomized experimental design to test the efficacy of formal professional development coursework and technical assistance programs. Cost analyses will be conducted to enable policymakers planning professional development programs to link costs with outcomes and select the “value added” approach most suitable to their needs.

Postsecondary college credit will be awarded for the professional development community college coursework. Additionally, participating VPK teachers will receive T.E.A.C.H scholarships for continued education.