

HOW VPK CAN START YOUR CHILD'S PATH FOR SUCCESS

Twelve years ago Destini Lewis was a college student at the University of South Florida. She also became the mother of a baby boy and between his care and her schooling, she was challenged with the high cost of childcare. When she found out that the Early Learning Coalition of Hillsborough County could help, she applied for childcare financial assistance. She qualified and was able to enroll her son in a childcare center that focused on high quality early learning skills. While she worked on earning her college degree hours, her son began his own educational path. At the age of four she enrolled him in a Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten (VPK) program that she says today laid the foundation for his future success.

She was also thrilled that the program was free to all 4-year-old children who were Florida residents.

Eventually Destini completed college and moved to Polk County and was approved to receive childcare financial assistance from the Early Learning Coalition of Polk County. She began to establish herself in the real estate business and then had a daughter that she enrolled in preschool and eventually VPK.

"I feel as if quality early learning is important because I like planting and I like gardening; and if you're a gardener and you like planting, you know that the foundation is so important for growth. Without a foundation, your limbs and trees wither away, but with a good foundation you know that your child is going to grow beyond what the Early Learning Coalition of Polk County provides because of the foundation," reflected Lewis.

Today Destini no longer relies on the Early Learning Coalition of Polk County for financial assistance for her childcare. She is now a real estate agent with a thriving business. Her daughter is also following a similar path with VPK as her brother learning her ABC's, colors, Spanish, and other amazing things.

Destini says her son, now twelve, is enrolled in a gifted learning program—and it began with VPK. She highly recommends the Early Learning Coalition of Polk County. "If you want your child ahead of the game, this is where you need to go for sure."

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