

The Florida Department of Education's (FDOE) Division of Early Learning (DEL) is once again collaborating with FDOE's *Just Read, Florida!* office for the seventeenth annual statewide *Celebrate Literacy Week, Florida! 2025* events. *Celebrate Literacy Week, Florida! 2025* is scheduled for **January 27-31, 2025**, so mark your calendars now for this important week of events. This year, our *Celebrate Literacy Week, Florida!* theme is **Building Literacy: Constructing the Foundation for Success!**

DEL supports the Celebrate Literacy Week theme from an early learning perspective with a focus on reading books to deepen children's knowledge and support the *Get There! Florida's Workforce Education Initiative*. Save the date for the simultaneous reading activity on Wednesday, January 29, at 10 a.m. (EST). Help us spread the love of literacy to infants and toddlers (Birth to 36 months) by reading *Little Excavator* by Anna Dewdney in provider homes, centers, and schools.

**Infants and Toddlers (Birth to 36 months)**  
*Little Excavator* by Anna Dewdney

This book promotes child engagement through lots of rhyming, action verbs and onomatopoeic language. The text highlights the actions and sounds of construction vehicles as it names each type of rig and its function. The action-packed, rhyming text with sound effects is made for reading aloud with dramatic effect.

**\*Suggested Vocabulary Words (Birth to 18 months)**

- **Big** – very large
- **Little** – small

**Suggested Vocabulary Words (18 to 24 months)**

- **Dig** – to break up and move earth with a machine
- **Tall** – bigger than most things or people
- **High** – far above the ground

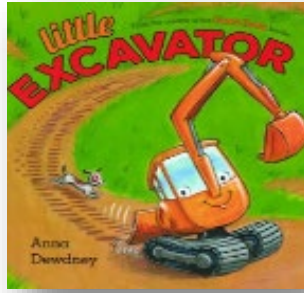
**Suggested Vocabulary Words (24 to 36 months)**

- **Big** – very large
- **Little** – small
- **Dig** – to break up and move earth with a machine
- **Tall** – of more than average height
- **High** – at a given distance from the ground
- **Lot** – a piece of land
- **Thump** – a heavy dull sound when one thing hits another



*\*Teachers are encouraged to use vocabulary from the book that is most suitable for the children in their care.*

## *Little Excavator* by Anna Dewdney Conducting a Read Aloud for Infants and Toddlers



### *Intentional Teaching Tips*

#### **Plan ahead**

- Prepare for a picture walk by reading *Little Excavator* by Anna Dewdney to become familiar with the story and identify pictures and any new vocabulary words you can introduce to the children.
- Create a child-friendly definition for each new word to build the children’s vocabulary and background knowledge for the story. See the list of suggested vocabulary words (with child-friendly definitions) on page 1.
- Determine open-ended questions.

#### **Before reading the book**

- Choose a place and time that supports an intimate setting. Gather children on the carpet or floor to join you.
- Review the cover of the book. Call attention to the labels and images that you see. Point and read the title, author and illustrator. Ask the children what they see.

#### **While reading the book**

- Be enthusiastic by showing excitement and curiosity as you read the story.
- Call attention to the images on each page of the book.
- Introduce new vocabulary words by using the best picture of each new word in the book. Note: It is not necessary for the text of the word to be on the same page as the picture of the word.
- Follow the prompts below to introduce new vocabulary words and ask open-ended questions. For example:
  - Ask the children what they see. Repeat what the child says and verify or correct with the actual word.
    - Teacher: “What do you see on the cover? What do you think this story is about?”
    - Child: “A truck.”
    - Teacher: “Yes, that is a truck. That’s Little E. E is for excavator. It is a big word to say.”
  - **Connect the story to real-life experiences.** Ask the children, “Have you ever seen that type of truck before?” If you have dump trucks or other construction vehicles, have them nearby to show the children and discuss that there are many different construction vehicles.
  - Repeat the prompts above as you encounter each new picture/vocabulary word in the story.

#### **After reading the book**

- **Connect the story to real-life experiences.** Show the last picture of Little E helping. Ask questions and make statements such as:  
“Little E is doing something important! What is he doing?” “He found a job that was just right for him.” “How would you feel doing a job to help others?” “What kind of jobs do you do around the house to help out?”

**Related Florida Early Learning and Developmental Standards:**

- **Language and Literacy, IV.A.3.a. (Birth to 8 months)** - Responds in varied ways to the speaker's voice (e.g., turning head, making eye contact).
- **Language and Literacy, IV.A.1.a. (8 to 18 months)** - Engages in multiple back-and-forth communicative interactions with adults as part of sensory, social and emotional experiences (e.g., simple games). Uses increased vocabulary to describe objects, actions and events (expressive).
- **Language and Literacy, IV.A.2.c. (18 to 24 months)** - Responds to language during conversations, songs, stories or other experiences.
- **Language and Literacy, IV.A.1.b. (24 to 36 months)** - Listens to and attends to spoken language and read-aloud texts and responds in ways that signal understanding using simple verbal responses and nonverbal gestures.

***Expansion Activities for Infants and Toddlers***

Following reading, teachers may choose to implement one or more of the following:

**Activities for Infants and Toddlers:**

- Activity 1: Five Big Dump Trucks Fingerplay, page 11
- Activity 2: *Little Excavator* Block Play Activity, page 12
- Activity 3: Music and Movement, Big Rig Play, page 12
- Activity 4: Outdoor Construction Crew Play, page 13

**Activity 1: Five Big Dump Trucks Fingerplay  
Birth to 8 months**

During small group time, engage the children in Five Big Dump Trucks Fingerplay. This fingerplay is adapted from “Five Little Monkeys.”

Five big dump trucks rolling down the road.  
*(Hold out five fingers, roll hands and bounce in place)*  
One pulls off to unload.  
*(Put down one finger)*  
Four big dump trucks rolling down the road.  
*(Hold out four fingers, roll hands and bounce in place)*  
*(Continue counting down)*  
Three big dump trucks...  
Two big dump trucks...  
One big dump truck...  
No more dump trucks rolling down the road.

**Related Florida Early Learning and Developmental Standards:**

- **Physical Development, I.B.b.1.a.** – Uses perceptual information to guide motions and interactions with objects and other people. Exhibits body awareness and starts to move intentionally.
- **Approaches to Learning, II.A.1.** – Shows awareness of and interest in the environment.
- **Language and Literacy, IV.A.1.b.** – Responds to gestures of adults.
- **Language and Literacy, IV.A.1.c.** – Responds to gestures that indicate understanding of what is being communicated.
- **Language and Literacy, IV.C.2.b.** – Vocalizes pleasure and displeasure sounds differently.
- **Language and Literacy, IV.E.1.a.** – Engages in verbal and nonverbal conversations using facial expressions, gestures or sounds to initiate or respond to communication.

## **Activity 2: Little Excavator Block Play Activity** **8 to 18 months**

Infants and toddlers can learn all throughout the day including tummy time. Activities from the Florida Early Learning and Developmental Standards' (FELDS) Approaches to Learning domain address how children deal with new environments, interactions and discoveries.

Using soft blocks, create a mini construction site for babies and toddlers as a wonderful way to encourage creativity, motor skills and sensory exploration. Here are some activities you can use during whole or small group play.

- **Stacking and Building:** Toddlers can stack soft blocks to build towers, walls or any structure they want. This helps to develop fine motor skills and hand-eye coordination.
- **Obstacle Course:** Construct a simple obstacle course using soft blocks. Toddlers can crawl around, through or over the blocks.
- **Sensory Play:** Incorporate soft blocks into sensory bins with materials like water or sand. This allows babies and toddlers to explore different textures and engage in imaginative play.
- **Tummy Time:** Stack a small tower of blocks within a baby's reach and encourage the baby to knock them down. This helps strengthen the baby's neck and shoulder muscles.
- **Sounds and Textures:** Use soft blocks that make sounds or have different textures which the children can grasp and shake to help develop fine motor skills and sensory awareness.
- **Peek-a-Boo:** Even though babies may not understand everything yet, expose them to the colors and shapes of the blocks. Hide a block under a cloth or container and play peek-a-boo. Ask questions and make statements such as: "Where is the red block?" "I found the red block." "Do you see the red block?"

### **Related Florida Early Learning and Developmental Standards:**

- **Approaches to Learning, II.A.1.** – Begins to show eagerness and curiosity as a learner.
- **Language and Literacy, IV.A.1.a.** – Engages in multiple back-and-forth communicative interactions with adults as part of sensory, social and emotional experiences.
- **Language and Literacy, IV.C.1.a.** – Looks intently at or points at a person or object that has been named with the goal of establishing joint attention.
- **Language and Literacy, IV.E.1.a.** – Engages in conversations, asking and responding to simple questions through gestures and single words.
- **Physical Development, I.A.1.a.** – Uses movement and sense to explore and learn.
- **Physical Development, I.B.2.a.** – Uses body position, balance and especially movement to explore and examine materials, activities and spaces.

## **Activity 3: Music and Movement, Big Rig Play** **18 to 24 months**

Music and movement are fun ways to engage toddlers in gross motor activities. Activities from the Florida Early Learning and Developmental Standards' (FELDS) Creative Expression Through the Arts domain capture toddlers' attention and stimulate their minds to learn through music and movement.

After toddlers listen to the story *Little Excavator* by Anna Dewdney, prepare an area in the learning environment with enough space for each toddler to move about safely and freely. Play the song "I'm a Bulldozer" by Johnny and the Raindrops. Toddlers can pretend they are construction vehicles. Once your toddlers hear the lyrics, "I'm a bulldozer, I push things around," model pushing toys around like a bulldozer. Talk about how the bulldozer moves objects around as it pushes. Invite your toddlers to push toys around like a bulldozer.

**Related Florida Early Learning and Developmental Standards:**

- **Approaches to Learning, II.B.1.** – Pays attention for longer periods of time and persists at preferred activities.
- **Creative Expression Through the Arts, VIII.C.2.** – Responds and moves in creative ways while listening to music, stories and or/verbal cues.
- **Language and Literacy, IV.A.1.b.** – Responds appropriately to simple requests.
- **Language and Literacy, IV.A.1.c.** – Responds to language during conversations, songs, stories or other experiences.
- **Social and Emotional Development, III.C.1.** – Enjoys games and other social exchanges with familiar adults.

**Activity 4: Outdoor Construction Crew Play  
24 to 36 months**

For this activity, prepare the outdoor learning environment by gathering construction hats, construction vests, mini construction play vehicles, construction cones and a wooden tree play set. Place your items in a storage bin labeled Construction Crew Play near the sand play area. In a designated area on the playground, use the materials in the sand play table for toddlers and preschoolers to engage in pretend construction play. As you are taking the construction play materials out of the bin, tell the children the name of each item. Tell them they can play with the construction vehicles, pretend to dig, plant trees or put on a construction vest with a hat and push and pull vehicles.

As a **transition activity**, sing the song “Do You Know Bulldozer?” as children prepare to walk to the outdoor play environment.

**Do You Know Bulldozer?**

(To the tune of “Do You Know the Muffin Man?”)

Do you know the bulldozer?  
The bulldozer, the bulldozer.  
Do you know the bulldozer?  
Who lives down the street.

As a **follow-up activity**, if you have construction vehicle riding toys available, children can ride in a dump truck or construction vehicle while playing outside. Ask questions and make statements such as:

- “What kind of construction vehicles did you use at the construction play table?”
- “I noticed you really like playing with crane vehicles.”
- “The construction vehicle you are riding in is yellow. Do you see another color on your construction vehicle?”

**Related Florida Early Learning and Developmental Standards:**

- **Language and Literacy, IV.A.2.a.** – Responds to an adult’s simple questions about what is being learned.
- **Social and Emotional Development, III.C.1.** – Enjoys sharing new experiences with familiar adults.
- **Approaches to Learning, II.C.1.** – Explores the environment with purpose and flexibility.

