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SUNCOAST The Campaign for GRADE-LEVEL READING

3rd Grade Reading Success Matters

It's Time to Soar Into the New Year!

Studies demonstrate that crucial learning—learning that sets the tone for a child's educational experiences and beyond—takes place before children are even old enough to enter school. Knowing that emphasizes the importance of introducing literacy concepts at home from day one.

Every moment spent with a child is a learning opportunity. With the hustle and bustle of daily life and the overwhelm of caring for children, it can be hard to recognize missed opportunities to strengthen a child's early literacy skills. Luckily, there are several tools and resources to help families integrate more learning moments for their children.

Soar in 4, in Manatee County, is a wonderful resource for families in our region. Their work is committed to helping families build a strong foundation for learning from birth. To do that, Soar in 4 offers complimentary programming that helps parents and families become their child's first literacy teacher through community resources, free materials, learning opportunities, and more. Their free monthly family night features a wonderful collaboration with the Bishop Museum and teaches families how to use the distributed materials to support classroom learning at home through play.

Leah Verier-Dunn had the great pleasure of sitting down with Sheila Halpin and Angela Knapek from Soar in 4 on the Connecting Communities podcast to discuss their mission and share everything you need to know about the new and magical Soar Lab.

Soar in 4 has truly discovered the magic sauce for family engagement and early childhood development. After years of developing their Soar in 4 program, a dream of both deepening learning experiences and making these experiences more accessible through a children's museum-like learning lab has finally come true. The Soar Lab is open and ready for you! Visiting the Soar Lab gives children and their caring adults an opportunity to put their phones down, pause from life's typical demands, and dive into full-blown fun and learning together. The Soar Lab shares, "Children who visit museums and hands-on learning spaces early in life tend to develop stronger skills in reading, math, and science. At the Soar Lab, kids can build prekindergarten and kindergarten readiness skills through interactive learning spaces that feature art, tinkering, engineering, and outdoor discovery. Resources for families and caregivers are also available to help support their involvement in early childhood education."

With Soar Lab staff standing by to support families as they strengthen their child's learning ecosystem, a museum of endless fun awaits the whole family. Their resources are available in multiple languages, and all families belong at the Soar Lab!

Among the resources available to families, Vroom is a wonderful, easy-to-use app that helps families boost their learning opportunities. The first five years are monumental in laying a strong foundation for every child. Vroom shares that "the things that matter most for healthy brain development, like talking and playing, don't require more time, money, or stuff." Knowing that brain building happens through talking and play can help us turn our attention to the frequent opportunities already accessible in our daily activities. Vroom tips help strengthen these moments, offering tools to turn everyday moments into brain-building opportunities. Get the FREE app here!

Did you know 80% of a child's brain development happens before their third birthday? Wow! For that reason, First 1,000 Days Suncoast is a pillar for family support in our region. Their mission is to support and connect families with resources during pregnancy and throughout a child's first 1000 days, when critical development occurs. A tri-county initiative comprising 90 partner organizations, First 1,000 Days provides free and affordable services to families in need.

In exciting news, with the generous support of Suncoast Campaign for Grade-Level Reading and Felicia and Gary Donson of Mom's Book Nook, along with the ongoing partnership of Sarasota Memorial Health Care System, The First 1,000 Days Suncoast initiative, in collaboration with Sarasota Memorial Health Care System's Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU), has announced its NICU Mobile Library. Intended to offer support to families during already challenging circumstances, the NICU Mobile Library shares books and literacy resources with families during their hospital stay. The program highlights the importance of early literacy as a foundation of lifelong learning, while helping to foster bonding through the joy of books—strengthening family connections and child development. In addition to checking books in and out, families are gifted free books to take home, ensuring that the love of learning continues.

With all this talk about family programming in our region, it's important to know that Suncoast Remake Learning Days preparations are in full swing! This exciting, 15-day, free, regional learning festival will be held from Saturday, April 18, 2026, through Saturday, May 2, 2026, across Charlotte, DeSoto, Manatee, and Sarasota counties. We invite you to partner with us in bringing a learning festival to life, where children and adults learn side by side, turning our communities' shared quality-of-life aspirations into reality. Curious to learn more about how you may get involved as an Event Anchor Host or Collaborating Partner? Join us for a Webversation, a one-hour information session that

explains all you'll need to know about the festival! You can sign up for a session using this link.

As we close out 2025, we are grateful for the families, partners, educators, and community members who show up to support children's learning and well-being across our region. Your care, creativity, and commitment continue to shape brighter pathways for our youngest learners.

As the year comes to a close, we wish you moments of rest, connection, and reflection, however you choose to spend this season. May the months ahead bring all good things, including continued hope as we step together into a new year of possibility.

Thank you for being part of the Suncoast Campaign for Grade-Level Reading community.

Let's Keep Connecting

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We welcome your thoughts. Contact us at info@GradeLevelReadingSuncoast.net.

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