

# FDLRS Record

Newsletter for the University of Florida FDLRS-MDC program in Jacksonville

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# Talking to Your Child's Teacher

By Amy Lane

After children have been back to school for a few weeks, parents start to have questions and, sometimes, concerns that they'd like to discuss with their children's teachers. Starting this conversation can be a little intimidating. Here are some hints to help with the nerves and make it more likely that discussions go smoothly and stay focused on the best interest of students.

- Don't wait too long – It's tempting to let a worry sit for a while, hoping it will resolve itself. Waiting can make the concern seem bigger than it is, *and* it gives potential problems time to grow into actual problems. Bring your question or concern up right away.
- Assume positive intent – Teachers and school teams want to help students reach their fullest potential. It's easy to forget that when we're worried about our child being harmed or treated unfairly. Conversations always go better when both parties have control of their emotions. Take a few deep breaths and remind yourself that you and the teacher have the same goal – helping your child succeed.
- Stay curious – Ask lots of questions. Going into a conversation thinking you already have a full understanding doesn't usually lead to a positive outcome. Open the conversation with the teacher with something like, "My son told me that he doesn't get help in class when he raises his hand. Can you help me understand why he would think that so I can talk with him about it?"
- Extend the teacher the same respect that you want for yourself. Ask for an appointment to talk in-person or via phone. Coming to school unannounced for a lengthy discussion, leaving long voicemails or texts may lead to frustration for you and the teacher if he or she cannot meet or respond immediately.

What if you try to resolve the concern in good faith, but the situation is not improving?

- The school counselor, vice principal, or exceptional student education staffing specialist are all part of the team serving your child at school. It may be helpful to ask them to join the conversation.

Phone a friend – US. Remember that the team at FDLRS-MDC are here to support your family, your student, and the educational teams who work with you. We are here to help problem-solve, offer solutions and ideas, and provide training and technical assistance to families and schools.



**Florida Diagnostic & Learning**  
— **RESOURCES SYSTEM** —

## OUR SERVICES

### Who we Serve:

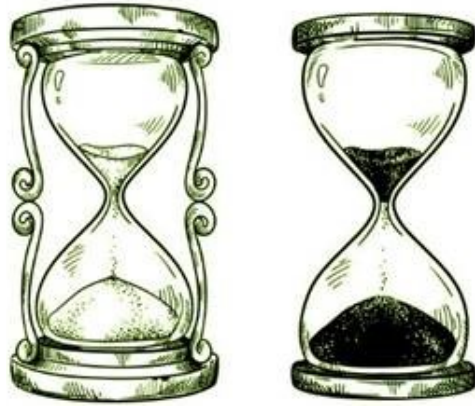
- Individuals between the ages of 3 & 22 who have not graduated high school.
- Who are struggling in school and have complicated medical, behavioral, developmental, &/or social histories
- And who reside in Baker, Clay, Duval, Flagler, Nassau, & St. Johns counties

### Services for Families:

- Comprehensive, multidisciplinary assessment, which may include psychoeducational, emotional-behavioral, &/or developmental pediatric evaluations
- Feedback sessions and a report detailing our findings
- Assistance in planning for your child's educational and psychological needs
- Trainings for parents covering a variety of topics

### Services for the Community:

- Training/consultations for educators, students, & other professionals
- Educational consultation and support services: This can include collaboration with school personnel to facilitate school placement & provision of services



## ***Recapturing Some Time...and Some Sanity***

*By Bernardo Cuadra, B.A., CWCM*

We all have those feelings like there just isn't enough time, or there's just too much to do. We all have those moments where we're rushing, stress is high, things are overlooked, forgotten, and attitudes are handed out for free. It seems that those feelings are only magnified further when we shift from summer to fall: school requires you & your child's time and attention; the holidays are ramping up and the days are shortening, along with your patience. Don't fret. There are a few things you can do to make your life easier by helping your child help you in managing your time. The key is getting in sync as a family. The more synergy you have, the more efficient you'll be. That saves everyone time and helps reduce stress (as long as you don't fill the new-found time with new demands).

*First*, stop reacting! Take control of what you can and be proactive. Organize your family needs, schedule things, categorize, reduce or remove unnecessary activities or to-do's. An initial time investment up front, will save you

significant time immediately and down the line. The longer you adhere to your schedules, the easier they'll become. Develop a schedule that includes consistent routines for each day. Daily routines, in turn, create weekly routines. I can't over emphasize the importance of the consistency. It creates habits that save time and effort. You don't have to schedule every part of the day unless you want to, but it's critical to do so with the key portions of the day. Set time in your schedule for appropriate sleep and wake up times. Proper rest is essential for your child to be at their best, and it might be beneficial for you too. You'll also want to schedule break, play and calm times. Knowing when those things are going to happen will help get you through those non-preferred tasks. Additionally, though the schedule should help guide the day, don't be afraid to deviate if you need to. It's a tool, not an unbreakable set of laws that you are bound by.

*Second*: Plan ahead. Preset the things you can by hanging the following day's

clothing; preparing the next day's foods; and setting up bookbags & briefcases the night before. Reduce what you can from the most stressful hours of the day. If showers can be done the night before, do that too. The idea is to try to get your mornings as close to wake up, dress, brush teeth and hair, grab what you need and go. The same goes for the evening routines.

*Third:* Use tools. You might need to invest in visual and verbal prompting to guide your child. If they can see and hear what the next steps are, it may help them move along from one step to the next, especially over time. I recommend that you remove any unnecessary distractions, limit options and provide specific praise to reinforce the appropriate actions or responses. Technology can be an ally or foe depending on how you use them. You can use them for prompting, reminders, alarm, soothing mechanism or incentives. However, try to remove them as entertainment items when you are rushing, during quality family times, study times and before bed.

*Fourth:* Pick your battles. You need to have realistic expectations of what you and your child can accomplish and how long that takes. Try to have them only do one thing at a time and limit yourself to the number of things you can easily manage at once as well. Don't lose time and energy over the things that may not matter in that moment. There will be other opportunities to revisit those things if you need to.

*Fifth:* Try to lead by example. Your children take their cues from you. If you're not ready to go when you need to be, they'll find time and ways to not be either. If you don't follow a schedule, they'll resist it too. Practice implementing new things during down times, like the weekend, or time off. Remember, **be consistent**. It may be difficult now, but it'll pay off down the line when you realize that you have some time on your hands to enjoy your sanity.

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UF-Jacksonville  
FDLRS-MDC serves  
Baker, Clay, Duval,  
Flagler, Nassau, &  
St. Johns County.





## Holiday Traditions for the Families

*By Sarah Falls, M.S., CCC-SLP*

The holiday season is full of traditions. Traditions like eating lots of turkey, Black Friday shopping, and spending time with family. Does your family have their own special traditions? Maybe your family tradition is baking the best pumpkin bread each year using your grandmother's secret recipe, or maybe your family runs the Turkey Trot 5K before the big Thanksgiving feast. Holiday traditions are a wonderful way for families to create special bonds, make memories, maintain consistency, and spread joy. If you are looking to add new family traditions to your holiday season, here are some ideas:

### **Fun in the Kitchen**

Look through recipes and have your child decide what food to cook or bake! You can look at recipes online, in cookbooks you might already have, or you can ask a friend for a recommendation. Involve your child as much as you can! You can start by making a grocery list together and going to the store to find ingredients. Then, you both can measure and mix ingredients in the kitchen. Your child can describe the different ingredients (e.g., shape, taste, texture) and retell the recipe instructions while the food is in the oven. Maybe the new recipe is something you will

Continued on next page.

make each year as a new tradition, or maybe the tradition is trying a different recipe each year as a family.

### Family Game Night

You can play a family favorite board game, try a new one, or make up your own game! Holiday charades, crafts, and dinner conversation starters are also some fun ideas. Let your child be in charge of choosing a game, setting it up, and teaching the family how to play.

### Library Trip

Go to the library as a family and check out a holiday book. See if your child can get their own library card, too! You can read the book together at home, play “I spy” while looking at pictures in the book, and ask them WH (who, what, where) questions about the story. You can

also encourage your child to flip the pages, describe what is happening in the pictures, and talk about what their favorite part of the book was. Don’t forget to look online for fun activities that relate to the book!

### Movie Night

A movie night at home is a great way to make memories in a comfortable place, especially in cozy pajamas! Have your child choose a movie for the family to watch, even if it’s not holiday themed. You can make popcorn, drink hot chocolate, or eat the yummy food you made in the *Fun in the Kitchen* activity.

### Helpful Links

[Baking and Language Skills](#)

[Interactive Reading Tips](#)

[Fall Picture Books](#)

## Retro Diner Hour



### Upcoming Dates:

Meets the 2nd Wednesday  
of Each month.

Beginning at  
5:00 PM

Adults

with autism spectrum disorder  
will have the opportunity to engage in facilitated  
social conversations via Zoom. This event will temporarily take the place  
of the Breakfast Club Meetings during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Register online at: <https://ufhjax.zoom.us/meeting/register/tJEvceCrrzwvG92WVODDjJV4-ue4HG3r-67G>

For more information please contact [bernardo.cuadra@jax.ufl.edu](mailto:bernardo.cuadra@jax.ufl.edu)

# Preventing Holiday Drain

*by Johanna Lopez, Ed.S., NCSP, School Psychologist*

It is the most wonderful time of the year: winter break! Students are usually excited to get a break from school, while parents are trying to find ways to keep their children entertained. While time away from school allows students to recharge, too much time away from school can affect a child's performance. Research indicates that extended periods of break from learning have detrimental effects on student's academic performance.

Here are a few ideas to keep your child entertained and stimulate growth during the holiday season:

## **Volunteer**

Give back to the community by spending time volunteering with a non-profit organization. Find a cause that your child is interested or a volunteer activity that can enhance or teach certain skills.

## **Visit the Local Library**

The library is full of resources, and often they are free or at little cost. Check your local library for a list of events or resources.

## **Read**

Check out a book and tie it in with the holiday season. Learn about diverse holidays and traditions from around the world. Many libraries have book recommendations for different reading levels.

## **Try a Massive Open Online Course (MOOC)**

Many universities including Ivy Leagues like Harvard, Yale, MIT offer free courses



throughout the new year. Self-paced courses would be great to take during the holiday break and an opportunity to learn a new skill.

## **Enrichment Activities**

Visit your local museum, or a botanical garden, or do some arts and crafts.

## **Use recent school assignments to create activities.**

If your child is learning about fractions, use baking and following a recipe to tie in that skill.

## **Holiday Shopping**

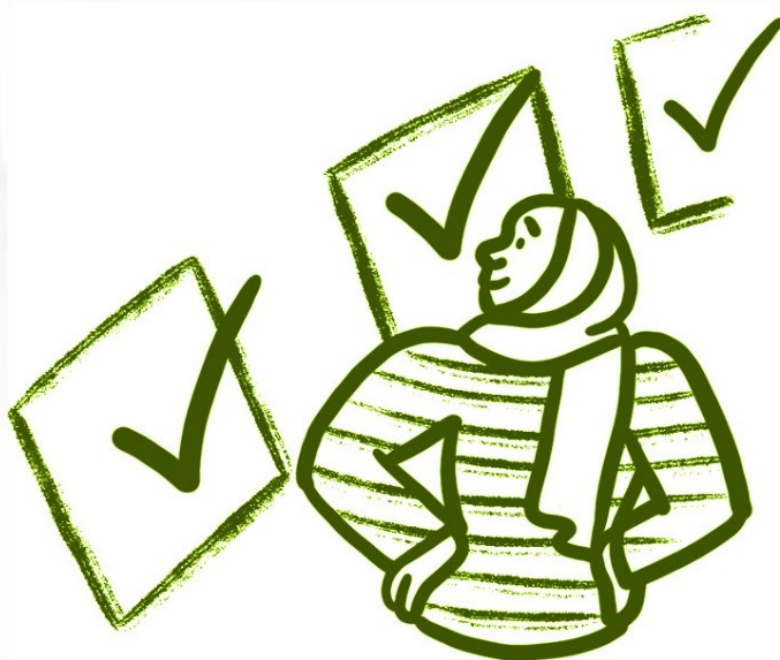
Discuss finance and budgeting while holiday shopping. Encourage your child to create a budget, make a list of items to buy, and use money.

## **Thank you Notes/ Holiday Cards**

Have your child assist or have them write thank-you notes to family and friends. This a great opportunity to review spelling words and learn new vocabulary.







## Do Not Set Resolutions, Set Intentions

*by Johanna Lopez, Ed.S., NCSP, School Psychologist*

Early in a new year, many have fresh goals and determine those by resolutions they think of throughout the year for things they do not prefer or want to change. How can one achieve those goals? Intent, one who is intentional blossoms because it is valued deeper than the surface of that individual. They internalize it with the hopes making sure choices are solid and hold value to themselves. Whether it is for your child, yourself, or your family as whole be intentional. It is healthy for your emotional wellness and it sets you up for success with obtaining those “resolutions” many try to achieve.

1. Make sure it something that is of high value to you, motivational.
2. Making sure the goal is realistic, specific, manageable, and assessable.
3. Write it down.
4. Have an action plan.
5. Stick to it.

Here are some sites to assist with being intentional and successful with goal setting. Making changes that may make your life more full or even more at ease. Be kind to yourself and remember your true intentions are always a good decision.

For your kids:

<https://biglifejournal.com/blogs/blog/goal-setting-for-kids>

For yourself:

<https://actionforhappiness.org/take-action/set-your-goals-and-make-them-happen>

<https://www.berkeleywellbeing.com/goal-setting.html>





## Planned Ignoring

*by Diego Castillo, M.S.,  
Educational & Training Specialist*

**Planned ignoring** can be effective for reducing problem behaviors that are meant to get attention or avoid a task. Planned ignoring means **purposely** ignoring your child’s problem behavior, and providing them with an appropriate way to express themselves. **Planned ignoring is meant for problem behaviors that are NOT dangerous to your child or others.**

Two examples of problem behaviors that can be ignored are whining (mild) and swearing (severe). Let’s use homework as an example of a task your child may want to avoid. You tell your child to do their homework, but they whine and say “I hate homework.” In this situation, your child is seeking your attention and attempting to avoid a task—the homework.

If you respond with something like, “stop it,” you may get into an argument with your child. The more you argue, the longer your child is able to avoid doing their homework. Instead, you can ignore their

complaining, and add a rephrase like “This homework is hard for me, and it makes me mad. Can you help me?” “Sure! Let’s see what you have to work on.” **By ignoring your child’s whining, you are teaching them that it does not get them out of doing things you tell them to do.**

Now, let’s use the homework example but replace whining with a more complex situation like swearing. In this situation, you may want to reprimand them by saying something like, “don’t swear at me.” However, reacting to the swear or reprimanding them actually reinforces the swearing by focusing attention on it, and it can start an argument. The argument with your child will delay them having to complete their homework, which is what they want.

Instead of reprimanding them or arguing with them, ignore the swear and rephrase with, “I am so angry and frustrated with this homework. I need help.” “OK, how can I help you?” In this situation, you are ignoring the swear and starting a dialogue with your child. **By ignoring the swear, you are teaching them that swearing at you does not get them out of doing things you tell them to do.**

It is important to recognize that planned ignoring looks different depending on the context and your child’s age. **Planned ignoring should always be paired with a model of the appropriate way to communicate a need or want.** Always consider the situation, the context, and your child as an individual.

