I. Purpose

This document is a tool for Project Learning Tree facilitators interested in implementing early childhood educator workshops. It contains information about key contacts; best practices for communication; funding opportunities; annual conferences; and resources. This information is beneficial when attempting to organize an educator workshop in order to expand the opportunities for PLT in the early childhood field in the state of Florida. Also included is background information about how

II. Key Contacts

A number of people have been implementing PLT early childhood environmental education workshops in Florida. They can offer suggestions and assistance for those with interest in this area. Below are their names and contact information in three sections: Steering Committee members, in-service workshop contacts, and pre-service workshop contacts. Steering Committee members may be able to reach out to other PLT facilitators and are experienced with organizing and conducting workshops. In-service workshop contacts are familiar with conducting workshops for practicing educators, while pre-service contacts are more experienced with workshops for educators who are still in school. These pre-service contacts and facilitators are listed with their specific university/college affiliation.

A. Steering Committee Members

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contact</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Phone Number</th>
<th>Email Address</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Robert Raze</td>
<td>Pinellas County</td>
<td>727-712-5882</td>
<td><a href="mailto:Raze.robert@spcollege.edu">Raze.robert@spcollege.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vanessa Spero-Swingle</td>
<td>Brevard County</td>
<td>321-633-1702</td>
<td><a href="mailto:vspero@ufl.edu">vspero@ufl.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Debra Wagner</td>
<td>Polk County</td>
<td>863-683-8388</td>
<td><a href="mailto:flutterby@tampabar.rr.com">flutterby@tampabar.rr.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robin Will</td>
<td>Wakulla County</td>
<td>850-925-6121</td>
<td><a href="mailto:Robin_wills@fws.gov">Robin_wills@fws.gov</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karen Johnson</td>
<td>Hillsborough County</td>
<td>812-987-6969 x222</td>
<td><a href="mailto:karen.johnson@sdhc.k12.fl.us">karen.johnson@sdhc.k12.fl.us</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

B. PLT Facilitators

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>County</th>
<th>Town</th>
<th>Contact</th>
<th>Phone</th>
<th>Email</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Central</td>
<td>Orange</td>
<td>Mount Dora</td>
<td>Mark Miller</td>
<td>407-703-1744</td>
<td><a href="mailto:mmiller@apopka.net">mmiller@apopka.net</a></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Polk</td>
<td>Lakeland</td>
<td>Deb Wagner</td>
<td>863-683-</td>
<td><a href="mailto:flutterby@tampabar.rr.com">flutterby@tampabar.rr.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polk</td>
<td>Lakeland</td>
<td>Fred Wiechmann</td>
<td>863-688-2771</td>
<td><a href="mailto:fwiechmann@lcsonline.org">fwiechmann@lcsonline.org</a></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Central</td>
<td>Brevard</td>
<td>Cocoa</td>
<td>Vanessa Spero-Swingle</td>
<td>(321) 633-1702</td>
<td><a href="mailto:vspero@ufl.edu">vspero@ufl.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Central</td>
<td>Hillsborough</td>
<td>Ruskin</td>
<td>Dolly Cummings</td>
<td>813-363-5438</td>
<td><a href="mailto:campbayou@yahoo.com">campbayou@yahoo.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hillsborough</td>
<td>Thonotosassa</td>
<td>Karen Johnson-Folsom</td>
<td>813-987-6969</td>
<td><a href="mailto:Karen.johnson@sdhc.k12.fl.us">Karen.johnson@sdhc.k12.fl.us</a></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hillsborough</td>
<td>Thonotosassa</td>
<td>Mary Spence</td>
<td>(813) 987-6969</td>
<td><a href="mailto:mary.spence@sdhc.k12.fl.us">mary.spence@sdhc.k12.fl.us</a></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hillsborough</td>
<td>Tampa</td>
<td>Diana Kyle</td>
<td>813-932-2396</td>
<td><a href="mailto:fortkyle@aol.com">fortkyle@aol.com</a></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Central</td>
<td>Alachua</td>
<td>Gainesville</td>
<td>Rebecca Wolfson</td>
<td>352-448-1357</td>
<td><a href="mailto:rwolfson@flvs.net">rwolfson@flvs.net</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alachua</td>
<td>Gainesville</td>
<td>Marilyn Kershner</td>
<td>(352) 213-0101</td>
<td><a href="mailto:info@naturenookbooks.com">info@naturenookbooks.com</a></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wakulla</td>
<td>St. Marks</td>
<td>Lori Nicholson</td>
<td>(850) 925-6121</td>
<td><a href="mailto:lori_nicholson@fws.gov">lori_nicholson@fws.gov</a></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southeast</td>
<td>Miami</td>
<td>Dade</td>
<td>Marcia Bisnett</td>
<td>305-322-6273</td>
<td><a href="mailto:seleefer@webtv.net">seleefer@webtv.net</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Martin/Palm Beach</td>
<td>Miami</td>
<td>Royanne Reusch</td>
<td>1-800-791-6072</td>
<td><a href="mailto:Royanne127@yahoo.com">Royanne127@yahoo.com</a></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Palm Beach</td>
<td></td>
<td>Janice Kerber</td>
<td>(561) 236-8431</td>
<td><a href="mailto:Janice.kerber@myFWC.com">Janice.kerber@myFWC.com</a></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palm Beach</td>
<td>North Palm</td>
<td>Veronica Frehm</td>
<td>(561) 776-7221 ext 104</td>
<td><a href="mailto:veronica@macarthurbeach.org">veronica@macarthurbeach.org</a></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

C. Pre-Service Workshops Contacts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>College/University</th>
<th>Contact Name</th>
<th>Phone Number</th>
<th>Email Address</th>
<th>Facilitator</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Florida Gateway College</td>
<td>Sharron Cuthbertson</td>
<td>386-754-4495</td>
<td><a href="mailto:sharron.cuthbertson@fgc.edu">sharron.cuthbertson@fgc.edu</a></td>
<td>Cheryl George</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miami Dade College</td>
<td>Laurie Shapero</td>
<td><a href="mailto:Lshapero@mdc.edu">Lshapero@mdc.edu</a></td>
<td></td>
<td>Marcia Bisnett</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RCMA Childcare and Education Providers</td>
<td>Judy Burleson</td>
<td>772-633-4419</td>
<td><a href="mailto:judybur@rcma.org">judybur@rcma.org</a></td>
<td>Robert Raze</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Petersburg College</td>
<td>Robert Raze</td>
<td>727-712-5582</td>
<td><a href="mailto:Raze.Robert@spcollege.edu">Raze.Robert@spcollege.edu</a></td>
<td>Robert Raze</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Santa Fe College</td>
<td>Karen Bennett</td>
<td>352-395-5599</td>
<td><a href="mailto:karen.bennett@sfcollege.edu">karen.bennett@sfcollege.edu</a></td>
<td>Nancy Peterson</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### III. Contacting Potential Participants on Behalf of PLT

This section contains information concerning the best methods to locate early childhood educators that you may want to work with, in addition to information that you may find useful when addressing potential attendees of early childhood workshops. The information can be helpful for addressing both formal and non-formal educators, administrators, and others in the early childhood field. The first section contains suggestions for locating potential workshop attendees; the second lists helpful talking points - a bulleted list that describes the many benefits of PLT ECE curriculum and addresses concerns that educators or administrators may have; the third contains a sample letter/email that can be used as a template when contacting others; and the final section includes an excerpt from an EDIS document that describes the need for early childhood environmental education.

#### A. How to Find Early Childhood Educators

When attempting to locate early childhood educators who are potential workshop attendees, consider these avenues:

1. **Local Early Learning Coalitions & Daycare Centers**

   There are thirty early learning coalitions (ELCs) throughout the state of Florida. These organizations will have connections with many early childhood education opportunities in an area and are a good starting point for contacting potential attendees. They may be interested in hosting a workshop for their coalition members.

   Early childhood education providers are listed within their Early Learning Coalition’s webpage. These providers are a potential source of workshop attendees. However, you may need to assemble a group of educators from several providers in order to have enough participants to host a workshop.

   For more information, see [http://www.floridaearlylearning.com/coalitions.aspx](http://www.floridaearlylearning.com/coalitions.aspx).
2. Local Colleges and Universities

Many local colleges and universities have degree programs concerning early childhood education. The professors of these types of programs may be interested in hosting workshops either for their fellow educators or their students.

3. Local Elementary Schools

Local elementary schools that offer pre-kindergarten, kindergarten, and first grade classes are other potential sources of workshop attendees. In order to have enough educators for a workshop, you may need to contact to several schools within a district or host a combination early childhood and Pre-K through 8 workshop.

B. Helpful Talking Points

1. Why is EE important in early childhood?
   a. Increases critical thinking, problem-solving, and social skills
   b. Linked to decreases in attention disorders
   c. Decreases risks of obesity and other health problems

2. Why choose PLT for your EE?
   a. “Hundreds of professional educators and technical experts review, field test, and independently evaluate all of PLT’s curriculum materials”
   b. “Independent evaluators confirm that PLT activities increase students’ knowledge, reasoning, and academic skills”

3. What is the “Environmental Experiences for Early Childhood” curriculum?
   a. “Integrates nature-based exploration, art, literature, math, music and movement”
   b. Supplemental to current curriculum
   c. Correlates to the following standards:
      i. Florida VPK standards
      ii. National Association for the Education of Young Children criteria
      iii. North American Association for Early Childhood Environmental Education Guidelines for Excellence
      iv. Head Start Child Outcome Frameworks
   d. Extends beyond the classroom by providing activities for family and friends
   e. Adaptable for various age groups and children with special needs

4. What does it take from us (schools/educators)?
   a. Low cost per teacher (about $20)
   b. Flexible trainings options (1/2 day, whole day, combination workshops, etc.)
   c. Can fulfill CEU’s based on county

5. Benefits of training with PLT
   a. For teachers and administrators
      i. “Workshops train educators in environmental education, how best to use PLT curriculum materials with their students in their own setting, and how to engage with (and draw upon) their community”
C. Sample Email/Letter

Hello XXXXX,

I am writing on behalf of Florida Project Learning Tree, an organization dedicated to helping students explore the natural world, while fostering critical thinking skills and encouraging creativity, originality and flexibility. The Florida branch of our organization is housed on the University of Florida’s campus! Have you heard of us?

PLT reaches out to students by training educators to use our award-winning curriculum, aligned to both state and national educational standards. In 2010, we published Environmental Experiences for Early Childhood, which includes over 130 experiences that engage children in outdoor exploration and is specifically designed for educators who work with children ages three to six.

To prepare educators to use this particular resource, we are reaching out to pre-service educators, such as your students. We would love the opportunity to host a workshop for your students! We can host either one-day or multi-day workshops on both weekdays and weekends. After attending our workshops, educators will be equipped with the early childhood curriculum which includes 11 lessons, a CD full of music and activities, additional resources for teachers, and supplemental materials for students’ families to continue the lessons at home!

I would be happy to speak with you in person or provide more information about this professional development opportunity. Please let me know if you have any questions or if there is an appropriate time for us to meet!

For more information, check out www.sfcc.ufl.edu/plt or www.plt.org!

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Name
Affiliation
Contact Information
D. Why is Early Childhood Environmental Education Important?

“Why is Early Childhood Environmental Education Important?”
Kristen Glover and Dr. Martha Monroe
University of Florida School of Forest Resources and Conservation

“It is crucial for young children to interact with their natural environment both to develop a positive regard for the environment and to flourish as healthy individuals (Wilson, 1996). In his book, Last Child in the Woods, Richard Louv summarized much of the research on children and nature and discussed the fading relationship that exists between children today and the environment (Louv, 2005). The lack of interaction between children and their environment results in negative health effects on the development of young children such as, “childhood obesity, asthma, attention deficit disorder/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), and vitamin D deficiency, all of which have increased in prevalence in the US over the past few decades,” (McCurdy et al., 2010, 201). Some argue that this may be the first generation of Americans to have a shorter lifespan than their parents (Olshansky et al., 2005). Incidents of childhood obesity, asthma, and attention-deficit disorders are rising (Perrin et al., 2007). Besides the risks to the physical well being of children, a lack of outdoor play can limit creativity, impede cognitive development, and diminish social skills in young children (NLI, 2012). Due to more structured activities and stricter learning objectives in schools the amount of free time children have to experience nature directly is restricted and other avenues need to be pursued to provide nature experiences for youth. For their own benefits, children must spend more time outdoors interacting with the natural environment.”

An EDIS publication on this topic in in progress and posted on the Florida PLT website when completed.

IV. Funding for Early Childhood Workshops

There are several options for funding early childhood workshops. Many ideas that are useful for both facilitators and educators are listed below. Potential educators or administrators may be looking for suggestions on the best ways to fund workshops for their educators.

Suggestions for Seeking Funding

Many workshops are self-funded. Each participant pays the workshop fee ($20). Others are partially or fully funded by another organization.

1. Local Head Start office
1. **http://www.floridaheadstart.org/program%20directory.html**

2. **Local Early Learning Coalition**
   a. **http://www.floridaearlylearning.com/coalitions.aspx**

3. **Local educational associations or organizations**
   a. Many counties and school districts have associations that can provide funding, especially for private, independent, or other specialty schools (example: Jewish Federation of South Palm Beach County). A quick Internet search can provide you with these types of organizations in your area.

4. **Sponsorships by local companies**
   a. Many companies have specific funding for these types of events. Contact local businesses for opportunities to provide curriculum books for educators. Some local sponsors may be able to provide lunch or other amenities for workshop attendees.

5. **Incorporate into student fees (pre-service only)**
   a. If planned in advanced, many colleges/universities are able to include the cost of the curriculum guide into the course fees that students are already required to pay. In these cases, seek out professors or administrators and discuss this option for their students.

6. **Request per participant fees from administrators/educators**
   a. When there are no other options for providing funding, request a participant workshop fee from each attendee. Sometimes the school or nature center may be able to pay for a group of educators; other time, educators must pay for their own curriculum guide. (Incentives such as lunch may increase willingness to participate when attendees pay for their own workshop.)

7. **Apply to PLT Central for funding**
   a. **http://sfrc.ufl.edu/plt/facilitators_resources/files/FL_PLT_Workshop_Funding_Application.pdf**
V. Early Childhood Education Conferences

These are several annual conferences that address important elements of early childhood education. There are both state and national conferences included. Hosting presentations or a PLT table at these conferences can be great advertising for the organization and helps reach out to new participants!

College of Central Florida’s Early Childhood Conference
Held annually in the spring
Ocala, FL

Florida Association for the Education of Young Children
Held annually in the fall
Orlando, FL

The Southern Early Childhood Association
Held annually in the spring
Various locations throughout the southeastern United States

National Association for the Education of Young Children
Held annually in the fall
Various locations throughout the United States

VI. Florida Early Childhood Education Links

The following list contains several useful resources for more information concerning early childhood education in the state of Florida.

Office of Early Learning (http://www.floridaearlylearning.com/)
- Provides resources and information for parents and child care providers
- Professional development opportunities
- Local administration through Early Learning Coalitions (http://www.floridaearlylearning.com/coalitions.aspx)

Florida Association for the Education of Young Children (http://www.flaec.org/)
- Florida’s state affiliate of NAEYC
- Provide professional development for those seeking or renewing their certification

Florida Department of Child and Families (http://www.myflfamilies.com/)
- Provides information concerning training and professional development requirements for all types of child care facilities
Appendices
Appendix 1. Sample Agenda (others are posted on line in the Facilitator Workshop Materials section of our website)

Project Learning Tree
Early Childhood Experiences Workshop
March 16 & 23, 5-8:10PM
UF NRNA 2327

Nancy Peterson, FL PLT Coordinator
UF SFRC
njp@ufl.edu
352-846-0848

Kristen Glover, UF SFRC Master’s Student
kglover09@ufl.edu

Goals of the Workshop:
1. Learn about the Project Learning Tree Early Childhood program and resources
2. Sample various Project Learning Tree Early Childhood activities
3. Prepare and conduct an ECE activity

Schedule

March 16, 2015
5:10  Introduction, Workshop goals
5:20  Ice Breaker, “Going on a Bear Hunt” - Kristen
5:50  #3 Get in Touch with Trees
       Literature, Bark rubbings, Textured walk
6:45  Break and Discovery tables
7:00  #2 Sounds Arounds- Kristen
       Forest Concert, , Match the sounds
7:30  Skip Thru the Guide- 15 minutes
7:40  Homework assignment & planning
Four Groups (4-5 per group) Assigned one of the following activities to each group: #1, The Shape of Things, #4, We All Need Trees, or #9 To Be a Tree, #10 Trees as Habitats
Presentations will be 20 minutes and 5 minutes for questions and comments
8:10  Class ends

March 23, 2015
5:10-5:20  Groups meet to discuss final presentations
5:20-5:50  Group 1 - The Shape of Things
5:50-6:20  Goup 2 - We All Need Trees
6:20-6:50  Group 3 - Trees as Habitats
6:50-7:05  Break
7:05-7:35  Group 4 - To Be a Tree
7:35  Synthesis, Evaluations, Certificates
8:10  Workshop ends
Appendix 2. The Early Childhood System in Florida

Table A. Who are the major players in early childhood education in Florida?

| Department of Education      | • Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten (VPK)  
|                             |   ○ Free for all 4 year olds  
|                             | • School Readiness Program  
|                             |   ○ For families under 150% poverty line  
|                             | • Office of Early Learning  
|                             |   ○ Local Coalitions & administration  
| Department of Children & Families | • Credentialing for directors and staff  
|                             | • Trainings based on type of child care facility  
|                             | • Local & online trainings  
|                             | • Licensing & registering information  
| Department of Health & Human Services | • Office of Head Start  
|                             |   ○ Education, parent involvement, nutrition  
| Childhood Development Services | • Continuing Education Units  
|                             | • Online & Local Trainings  

Table B. Child Care Trainings Summary

**General Training Requirements:**
- 40-hour introductory child care training
- 10-hour in-service training annually
- 0.5 continuing education unit of approved training or 5 clock hours of training in early literacy & language development
- Director Credential for all facility directors

**Exemptions:**
- In-home, relative, and nanny care are not regulated
- Possible education exemptions based on certain professional programs available

**Director Credential:**
- Every CC facility must have a credentialed director
- Directors may only oversee one facility
- Directors must be present during most operational hours
- Valid for 5 years from issue date

**Staff Credential:**
- National Early Childhood Certificate, Formal Educational Qualifications, Active Birth through 5 CC Credential, or Active School-Age CC Credential
- One credentialed staff required for every 20 children
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Center</th>
<th>General Requirements</th>
<th>Operator/Director Pre-Service</th>
<th>Employee/Staff Pre-Service</th>
<th>In-Service Training</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Large Family Child Care</td>
<td>2 adults providing care; must be licensed</td>
<td>-30 hr family child care course -Staff credentials -5 hr early literacy &amp; language development course or 5 CEU's -First aid &amp; CPR training</td>
<td>-30 hr family child care course -5 hr early literacy &amp; language development course or 5 CEU's (both within 1 year of employment)</td>
<td>10 hr secondary module (director); 10 hrs annually</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Registered Family Day Care</td>
<td>Registration annually; background screening</td>
<td>-30 hr family child care course -5 hr early literacy &amp; language development course or 5 CEU's</td>
<td>-N/A if less than 20 children</td>
<td>10 hrs annually (director)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Licensed Family Child Care Home</td>
<td>Registration annually; state inspections</td>
<td>-30 hr family child care course -5 hr early literacy &amp; language development course or 5 CEU's -First aid &amp; CPR training</td>
<td>-N/A if less than 20 children -Information concerning substitutes based on hours per month</td>
<td>10 hrs annually (director)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Child Care Centers</td>
<td>Day cares, pre-schools, nature centers</td>
<td>-Director Credential -40 hr introductory CC training -5 hour early literacy or language development or CEU's</td>
<td>-40 hour introductory CC training -5 hr early literacy or language development or 5 CEU's</td>
<td>10 hrs annually</td>
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<td><strong>Table D. Resources for Further Information (State)</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Florida Association for the Education of Young Children</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Florida’s state affiliate of NAEYC</td>
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<td>[<a href="http://www">http://www</a> flaeyc org/](<a href="http://www">http://www</a> flaeyc org/)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Florida Association of Academic Nonpublic Schools (FAANS)</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Umbrella agency representing all of the major nonpublic school faith-based and non-sectarian Accredit ing Associations in Florida</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>[<a href="http://www">http://www</a> faans org/](<a href="http://www">http://www</a> faans org/)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Florida Coalition of Christian Private Schools Accreditation (FCCPSA)</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Grants accreditation to qualified Christian private schools and faith-based child care facilities</td>
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<td>[<a href="http://www">http://www</a> fccpsa org/](<a href="http://www">http://www</a> fccpsa org/)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Florida Department of Child and Families</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Provides information concerning training and professional development requirements for all types of child care facilities</td>
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<tr>
<td>[<a href="http://www">http://www</a> myflfamilies com/](<a href="http://www">http://www</a> myflfamilies com/)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Florida Head Start</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Florida’s HS State Collaboration Office</td>
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<td>[<a href="http://www">http://www</a> floridaheadstart org/](<a href="http://www">http://www</a> floridaheadstart org/)</td>
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<td><strong>Florida Home Schooling</strong></td>
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<td>Resources and support for Florida’s homeschooling families</td>
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<td>[<a href="http://florida">http://florida</a> homeschooling org/](<a href="http://florida">http://florida</a> homeschooling org/)</td>
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<td><strong>Florida Project Learning Tree</strong></td>
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<td>Florida’s state affiliate of PLT</td>
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