

Construction Update: SEU's RSG Early Childhood Center is Coursing Through Construction Milestones

By **Kaydence VanEtten** | March 19, 2026



(Construction progress of the early childhood center as of March 2026.)

LAKELAND, Fla. — Southeastern University's (SEU) Robert and Sandra Graper (RSG) Early Childhood Center is moving through major construction milestones after breaking ground last fall.

The RSG Early Childhood Center, serving children ages 0 to 4, is set to open its doors to the public in spring 2027. The childhood center will primarily serve as a lab school for early childhood education majors at SEU, offering the opportunity to gain clinical observation experience.

However, RSG will also serve as a lab school for nursing, speech therapy and psychology students. "We hope to have as many different opportunities for different majors," said Theodore Church, Assistant Professor in the College of Education at SEU and the Project Lead for Preschool Initiative.

The childhood center was originally set to open in fall 2026. However, permitting challenges have set the project back nine months, according to Church.

There have not been any specific construction setbacks so far, according to Glenn Barnard, Executive Director of SEU Trades and the Project Manager of Construction for the childhood center.

The childhood center has passed through some construction milestones since breaking ground last fall. Here's what's new and in progress according to Barnard:

- The block work for the walls was finished four weeks ago.
- All the steel trusses for the roof are installed.
- The underdrain rain collection system has been installed.
- The roof is being loaded with materials in preparation for the next stage of work.
- The interior stud walls are currently in progress.
- By the end of March, the building will be roofed in.
- By the end of April, the doors and windows will be installed.



(Construction progress of the early childhood center as of March 2026.)

The childhood center will include features found in a typical school, providing a learning space for children to grow and develop. These features include outdoor play spaces, classrooms, a multipurpose room and a car drop-off and pick-up line. While the outdoor spaces are mainly targeted towards the 3-year-olds and 4-year-olds, play spaces will also be available for the infants and 2-year-olds.

Classroom structure is laid out to target different age groups, ultimately meeting the needs of each student. The childhood center will also include a space called the Museum Room, which will serve as a multipurpose room, utilized by both the childhood center and the university.

The parking lot has been designed to include a car line. This specific parking lot structure will prevent excess traffic from backing up surrounding neighborhood roads, according to Church.

Safety considerations have also been implemented. Similar to SEU's main campus, an on-site officer will be present. Cameras with facial recognition will be installed. Barnard said, "Everyone will need to be badged to get in from an employee ... and student ... [standpoint]."

Aside from on-location construction, a crosswalk and sidewalk will be installed from the university to the childhood center, allowing students to walk from the main campus to their clinical experience, according to Barnard.

With construction on track for completion in spring 2027, the RSG Early Childhood Center will foster a new community in Lakeland. “What a cool thing though to revitalize the neighborhood with the sounds of kids playing outside,” Barnard said.