

Early

Learning & Education  
PROGRAMSWhat's  
Inside

Developing a Sense of Self 2

Healthy Bodies and Minds 3

Building Language 4

Pumpkin Bread 4

Fall Fun 5

## Building Language with the Arts

As children explore visual arts, music, drama, and dance, they learn vocabulary related to movement, feelings, thoughts, and ideas. They learn to express themselves with language by first expressing themselves creatively through the arts. Providing children with a wide variety of arts activities supports their development of language, creativity, and sense of self.

Visual arts can include drawing, painting, sculpting, and making collages. Offer materials that are a variety of colors, textures, sizes, and shapes to introduce new vocabulary. Children can draw with chalk, pencils, markers, or pastels, on different types of paper. Encourage children to paint with tempera paint and watercolors. They may use sculpting tools with playdough or clay, such as wooden dowels,

rocks, shells, or sticks. Encouraging conversations about how the materials feel, what they look like, or how they are being used, encourages children to express themselves. Remember that the process of creating art is more valuable than the product.

Music activities encourage children to listen, follow rhythmic patterns, and make discoveries about the science of sound. During music activities, children can create their own songs, sing along with their favorite songs, and explore sounds by playing different instruments.

Adults can use music to help transition children from one activity to another. For example, you might use songs about cleaning up, safety, washing hands, or eating healthy *continued on page 4*



## BOOKS ABOUT FALL

Children make connections between what they read and what they see around them, and these connections strengthen their developing literacy skills. Visit your local library and take a look at some of these books about fall.

- *How Many Seeds in a Pumpkin* by Margaret McNamara
- *Leaf Man* by Lois Ehlert
- *Leaves* by David Ezra Stein
- *Owl Babies* by Martin Waddell
- *Seed, Sprout, Pumpkin, Pie* by Jill Esbaum
- *Ten Red Apples* by Pat Hutchins
- *The Busy Little Squirrel* by Nancy Tafuri
- *The Runaway Pumpkin* by Kevin Lewis
- *The Very Busy Spider* by Eric Carle
- *Too Many Pumpkins* by Linda White



## Developing a Sense of Self

Children learn about themselves and the people around them every day. These experiences promote the development of their self-concept, which includes: the ability to be self-aware, practice self-regulation, show understanding of social and emotional concepts, demonstrate empathy, and take initiative in their own learning. Providing an environment that offers opportunities for social interactions and activities that allow children to explore and practice these skills is crucial to their development. Use the following ideas to incorporate the development of self into your daily curriculum.

- Create a “Peaceful Play Space” for relaxing, regrouping, reflection, and introspection. Include soft items for relaxing like large pillows or blankets, comfort items such as stuffed animals, puppets to act out stories, and materials for emotional development, such as safety mirrors and pictures of emotions.
- Invite children to help you make emotion cards. They can draw a picture of each emotion, or you can take photos of them acting out different emotions. Make a poster you can hang in your “Peaceful Play Space.” This will help children learn to identify and label emotions that they feel themselves or see in others.
- Make a “Talking Box.” Decorate a small box with question marks and pictures of people talking. Cut out small strips of paper that can be easily folded and placed in the box. Gather the children together and explain that during circle time each day, you will pull a special question to talk about out of the box. Invite children to think of questions for the “Talking Box.” Help them write out their questions, fold the paper, and drop it in the box. This activity encourages curiosity, initiative in learning, and group conversations.
- Help children learn to listen to each other during conflicts by using a “Talking Feather” or “Talking Stick.” The idea is that only the person holding the feather or stick can talk. When they are done, the feather or stick is passed to the next person. Children learn to actively listen and wait for their turn to respond.



# Healthy Bodies and Minds

Fall is a time of change. The weather cools, leaves turn, the days are shorter, and the wind blows. Fall also brings changes in health, such as allergies and colds. Children need to enjoy good physical and emotional health to be successful learners. Support children by creating a safe and sanitary environment. Keep surfaces and toys clean with a bleach and water solution (follow directions on the bleach bottle). Remember to wash hands frequently, especially before food preparation, coming inside from outdoor play, in between diaper changes, after toileting, and any other time you may come into contact with germs or bodily fluids.

Provide parents with information about nutrition and healthy habits. Post your health and wellness policy where it can be easily seen. Conduct a quick daily health check on each child in the morning. Educating children about good health practices invites them to participate in maintaining their own health and teaches them healthy habits that will

last a lifetime. Teaching children to identify body parts and communicate their health needs can be done by reading books together, singing songs about healthy habits, and engaging in daily talks.

Encourage healthy lifestyle choices by involving children in planning menus and preparing healthy snacks. Be sure to include activities that involve physical exercise every day. Demonstrate and practice healthy habits such as correct hand-washing, proper use of tissue, and how to cough into the crooks of elbows to minimize the spread of germs. To download posters, and find current health information and activity ideas, please visit the California Childcare Health Program website at <https://cchp.ucsf.edu>.

Source: *Staying Healthy: Practicing Illness Prevention* brochure by Children's Home Society of California (2017).



## Building Language with the Arts

foods. These songs support children in learning the language related to daily routines.

Drama activities can be set up by an adult or created by children. An adult can set up an area for dramatic play, such as housekeeping or a pretend store. Include props that invite children to explore daily rituals or experiment with new concepts. For example, a housekeeping area that includes props such as dishes, utensils, a phone, a table, and chairs. Use materials that children would associate with their own homes to provide opportunities for children to talk to each other about their families and how they live.

Creating a play area that resembles a post office or flower shop offers children the opportunity to experiment with concepts such as buying and selling. Look for opportunities to provide materials that build language and literacy skills, such as empty food boxes or containers with writing on them, so that children can make connections between written and spoken language. Children may also take props from dramatic play and use them to create their own stories. Creating their own stories and having rich conversations during play supports children in developing their language and literacy skills.

Dance activities invite children to express themselves non-verbally through movement. Children learn to navigate the space around them without bumping into others and build physical development. They may use dance to express their emotions (“How would you move your body if you felt happy?”), follow directions (“Move like a frog!”), tell a story, or express an idea. Children can dance with props such as instruments, scarves, or ribbons to support their creative expression. As children express themselves creatively and experiment with the arts, they are building the language skills they need to communicate with others and express themselves.

Source: *California Preschool Curriculum Framework, Volume 2* by the California Department of Education (Sacramento, 2011).

## BUILDING LANGUAGE

Developing oral language in children improves their ability to acquire reading and writing skills in the future. Consider the following suggestions for supporting language skills.

- Talk to children about things that are important to them.
- Use a variety of descriptive words about objects, actions, or feelings.
- Talk about a variety of topics, such as feelings, personal stories, and opinions.
- Match the complexity of your own speech to the child’s ability.
- Encourage children to talk to each other.
- Ask questions that expand, or add to, what a child has said.
- Provide opportunities for children to express verbal ideas in writing. They can dictate stories.
- Encourage children to talk through problems and conflicts.
- Keep books available and read to children often.

Sources:

*Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale Revised Edition* by Thelma Harms, Richard M. Clifford, and Debby Cryer (Teacher’s College Press, 2005).

*The Family Child Care Environment Rating Scale Revised Edition* by Thelma Harms, Debby Cryer, and Richard M. Clifford (Teachers College Press, 2007).

## Pumpkin Bread

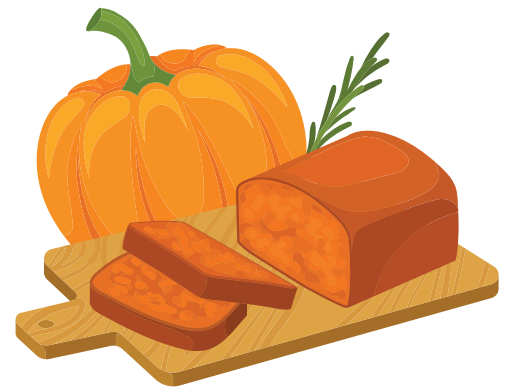
### Ingredients for Two Loaves

- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 1/2 teaspoon baking powder
- 1 teaspoon ground cloves
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 1 teaspoon ground nutmeg
- 11/2 sticks unsalted butter, softened
- 2 cups sugar
- 2 large eggs
- 1 (15-oz) can 100% pure pumpkin

### Directions

Preheat the oven to 325°F. Grease two 8 x 4-inch loaf pans with butter and dust with flour. In a bowl, combine the flour, salt, baking soda, baking powder, cloves, cinnamon, and nutmeg. Whisk until it is combined. In a separate bowl, use a wooden spoon to beat the butter and sugar until it has just blended. Add the eggs one at a time, beating the mixture in between each egg. Continue beating for a few minutes until the batter is light and fluffy. Beat in the pumpkin. Now add the bowl of dry ingredients slowly, stirring it into the wet ingredients until combined. Place half of the batter into each pan and bake them on the center rack for 65 to 75 minutes. Let the loaves cool in the pans for about 10 minutes, then turn them out onto a wire rack to cool completely.

Source: Recipe adapted from <https://www.onceuponachef.com/recipes/spiced-pumpkin-bread.html> in August 2024.



# Fall Fun

Planning seasonal activities promotes learning because it connects children with what they see around them with hands-on experiences. The following activities will keep children engaged in playful learning during the fall season.

**Activity:** Falling Leaves (Fingerplay)

**Age group:** Infants

**What you need:** No materials are needed, but you can use tissue paper leaves or artificial leaves as a prop if you choose.

**What you do:** Chant or sing (to the tune of *The Farmer in the Dell*) this fingerplay with one or more children. Remember to be animated and encourage children to participate as much as they can. Raise your arms up in front of you, wiggling your fingers as you slowly move them down like leaves falling from a tree and sing: *The leaves are falling down, the leaves are falling down; red, orange, yellow, green, and brown; the leaves are falling down.* If you are using tissue paper or artificial leaves, you can slowly drop them from your hands as you move your arms down.

**What they learn:** Infants practice tracking movement with their eyes, learn new vocabulary, practice moving their hands and arms, and interact with their caregiver.

**Activity:** Dancing Leaves

**Age group:** Toddlers

**What you need:** Orange, yellow, and red scarves or crepe paper streamers and music. Try using slower music that mimics leaves falling such as *Before the Last Leaf Falls* by David Lanz.

**What you do:** Invite children to choose a scarf or streamer and dance to the music. Children are more likely to dance if you join in the fun and dance too! Encourage them to move their arms and legs, waving the scarves and streamers like falling leaves.

**What they learn:** Children practice language, motor skills, and creative expression as they dance.

**Activity:**

Making Applesauce

**Age group:** Preschool

**What you need:**

Knife (adult use only), fruit/vegetable peeler, cutting board, large mixing bowl, potato mashers, eight to twelve apples, two tablespoons of lemon juice, two teaspoons of sugar, and cinnamon to taste.

**What you do:** Invite children to help wash the apples. An adult can then peel the apples, remove the cores, and cut them into slices. Invite children to watch the process and describe the different parts of the apple (peel, core, seeds, stem). Put the sliced apples in a pot and warm them over medium heat. Ask children what they think the heat will do to the apples. Once they are warm, put them into a large mixing bowl, and invite the children to take turns smashing them with the potato masher. Keep mashing until the mixture looks like applesauce, then add the lemon juice, sugar, and cinnamon. Give it a good mix, and enjoy!

**What they learn:** Children learn vocabulary about apples, discover how heat can change the texture of food, and learn that food can be made into different edible forms (eating a raw apple as opposed to eating applesauce).



# Fall Fun

**Activity:** Leaf Word Seek

**Age group:** School Age

**What you need:** A black marker and red, orange, brown, green, and yellow construction paper or cardstock cut into about 40 leaf shapes that are about the size of a 4x6 index card.

**What you do:** Invite children to help you cut out the leaf shapes. Leave one side of the leaf blank, and on the other side, write a letter of the alphabet. Once you have the whole alphabet, add some letters that are often used twice in names or words such as vowels (a, e, l, o, u) and some consonants such as c, r, s, t, and m. Now you are ready to play! Invite children to join you at a large table or on the carpet and turn the letters over so children can see them. One by one, invite each child to find the letters in their name. Once they have the idea, you can invite them to find other words from a written list.

**What they learn:** Children practice letter recognition, combine letters into words, and one-to-one correspondence when matching letters to words on a list.



## ABOUT CHS

For over 130 years, Children's Home Society of California (CHS) has adapted to the changing needs of children and families. Since 1891, CHS has worked diligently to protect our community's children and strengthen their families through diverse programs and services.

At CHS, we view a child not in isolation, but in the context of each family's health, stability, and resources. We believe that families are fundamentally strong and resilient. The mission of CHS is to reach out to children and families at risk with a range of services to ensure every child the opportunity to develop within a safe, healthy, and secure environment.

Therefore, CHS provides a variety of services to children and families in California and nationwide, working to improve their quality of life by offering vital information, education and resource services, and child care assistance.

CHS also serves as an expert resource for child care providers, other social service agencies, and government agencies at the local, state, and national level. To learn more about CHS and resources available to you, please visit our website at [www.chs-ca.org](http://www.chs-ca.org).

© 2024 Children's Home Society of California

If you would like additional copies of this newsletter to share with parents or other child care providers, please visit our website at [www.chs-ca.org/for-providers/provider-newsletter](http://www.chs-ca.org/for-providers/provider-newsletter).



Address Service Requested

NON-PROFIT ORG.  
U.S. POSTAGE  
**PAID**  
LOS ANGELES, CA  
PERMIT NO. 32415

CHILDREN'S  
HOME  
SOCIETY OF  
CALIFORNIA  
[www.chs-ca.org](http://www.chs-ca.org)

