



# Learning & Education PROGRAMS



## Language, Literacy, and Learning

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Inspire children to learn by creating an environment that is rich in language and literacy experiences that are varied, inclusive, and reflective of children's interests. An intentional educator observes children in order to understand their capabilities, needs, and interests; then uses this information to enhance the environment and plan activities that will support children's growth and development.

Through daily activities, investigations, interactions, and play, children learn about and practice the rules of language (its use, vocabulary, and grammar), concepts about print, phonological awareness (sounds of language), alphabets and word/print recognition, comprehension and analysis of age-appropriate

text, literacy interest and response, and writing strategies. Thoughtfully designed environments inspire children to engage in conversations with friends, and offer adults opportunities to expand children's thinking.

Language and literacy should be included in all areas of your program, including outdoors.

Create interest areas for books, writing, art, science, math, music, blocks, and dramatic play. In the book area include books that portray diverse cultures, languages, and lifestyles.

Children can create and include a photo album of their families or classroom activities. In the writing area, include a picture dictionary, writing samples, a selection of paper and writing materials, envelopes, a whiteboard

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### RELAXATION BREAK

Take a moment to practice self-care with this deep breathing exercise.

1. Sit comfortably in a chair.
2. Place one hand on your lower stomach to feel your breathing.
3. Close your eyes and focus on the movement.
4. Imagine there is a small balloon inside.
5. Imagine the balloon is filling up as you breathe slowly and deeply in through your nose.
6. Hold the breath for a few seconds.
7. Slowly exhale through your mouth as you imagine the balloon deflating.
8. Do this at least three times.





## Supporting Dual Language Learners

Many children who attend child care and preschool programs for the first time speak a language other than English in their homes. These Dual Language Learners (DLLs) are learning their home language while they also learn English. Educators can support children in the development of bilingual and bicultural competence by creating a thoughtfully structured environment and planning activities that build a sense of community for children and their families. Combine the strategies from the *Language, Literacy, and Learning* article with the following to support DLLs as they learn.

- Familiarize yourself with the families in your program to identify and build on preexisting knowledge from home, such as the knowledge of working on a farm or running a business.
- Establish a consistent routine so that children feel secure and comfortable learning.
- Create bilingual signs and labels for toy baskets. Choose a different color for each language and involve children in placing labels around the room with hook and loop fasteners.
- Invite families to share photos that children can use to create photo books and posters.
- Take photos of familiar places or objects (environmental print) such as stores, restaurants, or signs in the community. Use the photos to create books, posters,

bingo, memory games, or cut them into shapes to make puzzles.

- Create a “word wall.” Send home a bag with an alphabet letter on it and ask families to collect labels from boxes or cans that begin with that letter. Use the collected labels to create the alphabet on a word wall, a class book of foods we eat in our homes, or use the labels to make other games.
- Invite families to bring in empty boxes or plastic bottles that children can use for building or for dramatic play.
- Limit the number of children in interest areas to encourage conversations.

Source: *The Essentials: Supporting Dual Language Learners in Diverse Environments in Preschool and Kindergarten* by Iliana Alanís, Irasema Salinas-González, and María G. Arreguín (NAEYC, 2020).



# Understanding Anxiety

Anxiety is a strong feeling of worry or fear about real or imagined events. Two forms of anxiety seen in children are Situational Anxiety and Generalized Anxiety Disorder. Situational Anxiety is caused by a specific and temporary reason (e.g. separation or social anxiety). It stops when the situation stops. Generalized Anxiety Disorder is more constant, reasons are less specific, and it is difficult to control.

Educators cannot make a diagnosis, but they can provide a record of behaviors parents can share with a doctor upon their request. Symptoms of anxiety may include: crying, trembling, nausea, sweating, restlessness, irritability, lack of concentration, and unexpected reactions. Children may also tend to avoid situations by pretending to be ill or hiding, seeking constant reassurance, or asking frequent questions. Educators can create an environment that allows children to feel safe by following a predictable routine. Avoid singling children out during group activities. Instead, ask "Who would like to share?" This offers the option of being an observer to children who find being the center of attention stressful.

Educators can help children identify their emotions and practice relaxation techniques. Practice deep muscle relaxation by having children hold their bodies straight and tight like uncooked spaghetti, and then relax like a cooked noodle. Use pinwheels to practice deep breathing, or ask children to pretend their cupped hands are a bowl of soup. Ask them to smell their soup, and then blow on it to cool their soup. Learn more about anxiety by visiting <https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/anxiety-disorders.html>.

Source: Vanover, Sarah. "When Anxiety Leads to Challenging Behaviors: Strategies to Support Children." National Association for the Education of Young Children Annual Conference. Virtual Workshop on Demand, November 2020.



# Language, Literacy, and Learning

on an easel for children who prefer to stand while working, and clipboards that children can carry to different locations. In the art area, add books that show pictures of paintings, drawings, and sculptures. Select a few books and place them on the easels to display pages of interest.

Books about numbers, counting, shapes, and patterns can be added to math materials. Games that involve math concepts can also offer children the opportunity to learn and use math vocabulary. For example, while playing a board game with dice, children will count the number of dots and use math-based phrases such as “move ahead three spaces.” Non-fiction books about plants, animals, insects, food, and other reference materials help familiarize children with science vocabulary. Choose books that connect to the items available for investigation and add paper for children to use so they may draw or write about their work. In the music area, include songbooks and music scores.

Add books that include photos of buildings, construction, engineering, or maps to the block area. Children can reference them when they want to add details to their structures. Add graph paper and pencils for children to use when drawing a design of what they want to build. In the dramatic play area, add child-appropriate magazines and newspapers, phone books, empty food containers with labels, and menus. Provide puppets, dolls, and other storytelling props children can use to create or reenact stories. Display posters, children’s work, and charts on walls in an organized and uncluttered way so they are easily viewed. Place posters or books of insects, bugs, plants, and birds outside where children can reference them.

Play with children and ask them open-ended questions such as, “Can you tell me about what you are doing?” in order to extend children’s thinking, practice vocabulary, and encourage them to express themselves. Read and sing with children daily. Listening to well-written stories and repetitive songs and chants supports children in developing phonological awareness, grammar, and writing skills.

Source: *California Preschool Curriculum Framework, Volume 1* by the California Department of Education (Sacramento, 2010).

## REFLECTING ON LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT

An environment rich in language and literacy helps children develop the skills needed to successfully communicate and express themselves. Take a moment to reflect upon your program’s learning environment and the language experiences that are available.

Educators can support the language development of children by observing their interests and planning activities that allow children to investigate topics that are meaningful to them. Develop a plan for gathering materials such as posters, books, games, and music that support children in learning more about their interests.

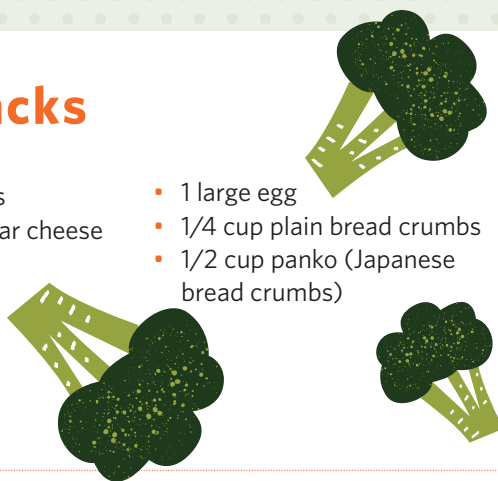
Consider the languages spoken by the children in your care. How are all languages included? Are materials for telling stories such as books, puppets, dramatic play items, and music reflective of children’s cultures? How can children use these materials to express themselves or communicate their needs? Engage in evaluation and self-reflection regularly in order to continually improve the quality of your program.

Source: *California Preschool Curriculum Framework, Volume 1* by the California Department of Education (Sacramento, 2010).

## Veggie Snacks

### Broccoli Poppers

- 4 cups broccoli florets
- 1 cup shredded cheddar cheese
- 1/2 tsp onion powder
- 1/4 tsp garlic powder
- 1 large egg
- 1/4 cup plain bread crumbs
- 1/2 cup panko (Japanese bread crumbs)



Chop the broccoli into small pieces. Steam it two to three minutes until it is tender. Dab the broccoli with a towel to remove excess water. Place all ingredients except the panko in a bowl and mix. Pour the panko onto a plate. Scoop out tablespoon-size balls of the broccoli, shape them into a ball, and roll them in panko. Place them on a cookie sheet and bake at 350°F for ten to fifteen minutes until they are crispy. Cool and serve.

### Carrot Chips

- 4 medium carrots
- 1-3 teaspoons olive oil
- 1/8 teaspoon salt

Preheat the oven to 400°F. Peel the carrots. Use the peeler to cut long, wide strips off the carrots. Add the strips to a bowl and toss them with olive oil. Place the carrot peelings in a single layer on a cookie sheet and sprinkle them with salt. Bake them for ten to twenty minutes until they are crispy. Shake the pan once or twice during cooking. The time will vary depending on the thickness of the carrots. Cool and serve.



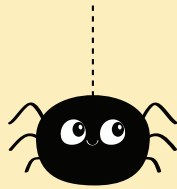
# Sing a Song of Spring

Songs you can sing or chant introduce children to vocabulary, build language comprehension, support math learning, promote self-regulation, and inspire creativity. Songs give children the opportunity to repeat and reinforce concepts in a playful and joyous way.

**Activity:** The Spider Spins a Web

**Age group:** Infants

**What you need:** Your voice.



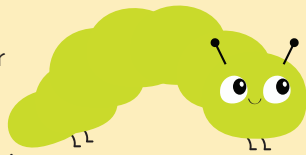
**What you do:** Lay the infant on her back in front of you and sing this song to the tune of *The Farmer in the Dell*. As you sing, hold your hands in front of you with your palms facing down, and place one wrist on top of the other. Wiggle your fingers like a spider. For the words “round and round” move in a circular motion, and for the words “up and down” move your arms up and down. End by tickling the baby’s tummy. *The spider spins a web. The spider spins a web; round and round and up and down, the spider spins a web.*

**What they learn:** Play that involves eye contact, touch, and singing strengthens the relationship between infant and caregiver. Infants are introduced to new vocabulary through movement. Point out spiders in children’s books or when you discover them outdoors to extend learning.

**Activity:** Little Caterpillar

**Age group:** Toddlers

**What you need:** Your voice.



**What you do:** Sing to the tune of the *Itsy-Bitsy Spider*. Suggested gestures are in parentheses. *The little caterpillar crawled upon a leaf* (crawl the fingers of one hand on the open palm of the other); *spun a little chrysalis* (move your arms in a rolling motion in front of you), *then he fell asleep* (tilt your head to the side and rest it on your hands). *While he was sleeping he dreamed that he could fly* (move your arms as if flying), *and when he woke up he was a beautiful butterfly* (hold your hands in front of you with your palms facing out and interlock your thumbs. Keeping your fingers tight together, move them like wings).

**What they learn:** This song is an introduction to the process of metamorphosis and introduces the scientific word “chrysalis.” Children also cross the midline (an invisible line that divides our bodies in half) when they follow the gestures, which helps them build connections between the two hemispheres of the brain.

**Source:** Adapted from <https://www.bussongs.com/songs/the-fuzzy-caterpillar> in December 2020.

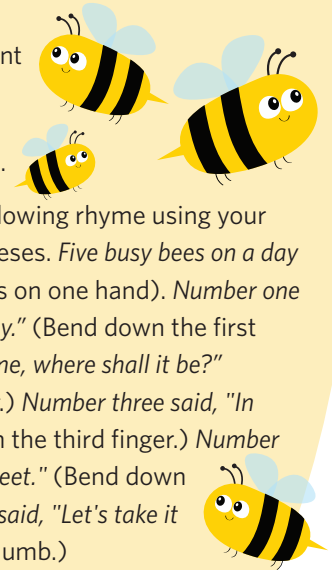
**Activity:** Five Busy Bees Chant

**Age group:** Preschool

**What you need:** Your voice.



**What you do:** Chant the following rhyme using your fingers as indicated in parentheses. *Five busy bees on a day so sunny* (hold up all the fingers on one hand). *Number one said, “I’d like to make some honey.”* (Bend down the first finger.) *Number two said, “Tell me, where shall it be?”* (Bend down the second finger.) *Number three said, “In the old honey tree.”* (Bend down the third finger.) *Number four said, “Let’s gather pollen sweet.”* (Bend down the fourth finger.) *Number five said, “Let’s take it on our feet.”* (Bend down the thumb.)



**What they learn:** Children practice counting, hear new vocabulary, and learn about bees. Expand children’s understanding of bees by going on a bee walk to observe bees outside (without disturbing them) and reading books about bees.

**Source:** Adapted from <https://www.angelfire.com/la/-kinderthemes/ifingerplays.html> in December 2020.

# Sing a Song of Spring

**Activity:** Blackbird Opposites Chant

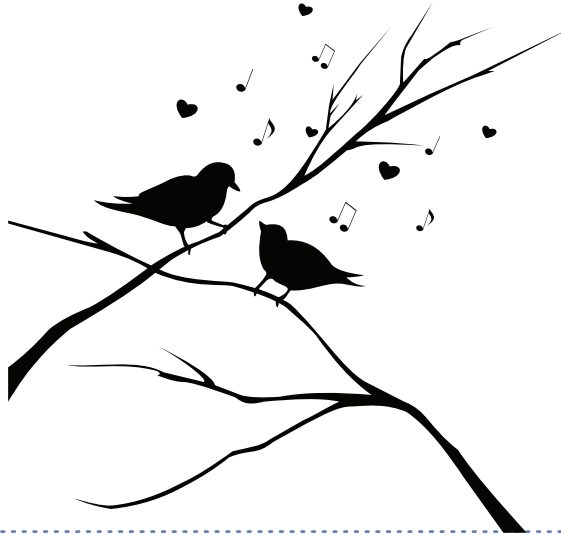
**Age group:** School Age

**What you need:** Your voice.

**What you do:** This is a variation of the traditional *Two Little Blackbirds* chant. Use two fingers on each hand to be "blackbirds." Act out the following rhymes about opposites. The rhyming words are underlined and the opposite words are in bold. *Two little blackbirds flying in the sky; one flies **low** while the other flies **high**. Two little blackbirds sitting on a cloud; one is **quiet** and the other is **loud**. Two little blackbirds sitting on a crown; one with a **smile** and one with a **frown**. Two little blackbirds in mid-flight; one goes **left** while the other goes **right**.* Ask children to help you think of more rhyming words that have an opposite.

**What they learn:** Children use critical thinking skills and acquired vocabulary knowledge to come up with words that rhyme and have an opposite word. Extend this activity by making a chart together of opposite words and rhyming words.

**Source:** Adapted from <https://youtu.be/zETBHaYNCrM> in December 2020.



## 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 childcare 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).

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