

# Early Learning & Education PROGRAMS

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## Self-Regulation Skills

A group of two year olds are playing outside on the grass with their teachers. One child is sitting on a blanket looking at books about feelings. Two children are blowing bubbles. One teacher holds the bubble wand while one child blows on it and the other child tries to catch the bubble. Four more children are crawling through a tunnel that has been placed on the grass. Another teacher sits at one end of the tunnel and says, "It's Sarah's turn to crawl through like a cat. 1, 2, 3, go!" When Sarah reaches the end of the tunnel, the teacher exclaims, "Sarah's through! Woo hoo! Now it's Ruben's turn to crawl like a cat. 1, 2, 3, go!" The teacher encourages the toddlers waiting their turn to wiggle and dance.



activities is to encourage children to practice self-regulation skills. The term self-regulation refers to a child's ability to evaluate his environment, situations, and people in order to regulate his thoughts and feelings, and respond in a socially appropriate manner. Children use their five senses and previous experiences to respond to new people and places. For example, an infant who seeks the comfort of a familiar person when he hears a loud sound is regulating his feelings by connecting with someone he knows will keep him safe.

In this scenario, the teachers have set aside an area where children can relax with a book when they would prefer alone time. They have chosen books about

Although the children are learning language and social skills through play, the focus for these

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### BE PREPARED!

The following free resources can help you develop and implement an emergency plan.

- Community Care Licensing provides disaster preparation resources that are specific to licensed child care facilities at <https://www.cdss.ca.gov/inforesources/child-care-licensing/public-information-and-resources/disaster-resources>.
- The California Child Care Disaster Plan is available in English and Spanish at <https://cchp.ucsf.edu/content/disaster-preparedness>.
- The California Poison Control System provides information about poisonous items (medications, cleaners, bites, plants) at <https://calpoison.org>. Call (800) 222-1222 for emergency guidance.
- The American Red Cross offers disaster preparedness information in English and Spanish at <https://www.redcross.org/get-help/how-to-prepare-for-emergencies.html>.
- Learn how to prepare for wildfires, receive emergency alerts, and find resources for recovering after a wildfire at <https://response.ca.gov>.



## Easing Through Transitions

Providing a welcoming environment with a consistent daily schedule provides children with a sense of routine throughout their day. When children know what to expect, they are more likely to transition with ease. Educators can assist children through daily transitions by being patient, empathetic, creative, and consistent. Consider how many transitions children navigate when they are with you. Transitions occur between activities, during care routines like eating and napping, and during arrival and departure.

Children's ages, development, and temperament affect how they respond to transitions. For example, children under three may need extra assistance stopping and starting activities. Children may also be so focused on their work that they are not ready to make the mental shift of moving on to something new. Look at the daily schedule and try to reduce the number of daily transitions. For example, if children are playing outside, serve snack outside rather than transitioning the children to the inside environment. You can also try these ideas to help create a smooth transition for children.

- List daily events on a poster board with a photo depicting the activity. Use a colored clip to indicate the current activity. A few minutes before transition time, walk around the room and say, "The clip has moved. What will we do next?" Invite children to take turns moving the clip.

- Use trays or a counter top to save children's work in progress. An orange cone can mark building structures that are still being worked on.
- Use funny songs, chants, or props to introduce transitions. Use musical instruments and create a parade to the next activity.
- Make transitions a movement activity. Ask children to move like spiders on a web while they put away their materials.
- Gently tap one child on the shoulder and whisper, "It's time to clean up. Tell a friend!"
- Find more ideas in the book *Transition Magician: Strategies for Guiding Young Children in Early Childhood Programs* by Nola Larson, Mary Henthorne, and Barbara Plum.



# Supporting Families

Educators are an excellent resource and support system for parents and guardians. Parents may turn to their child's teacher for guidance and advice when they encounter unexpected personal situations such as a partner separation, financial struggles, or the loss of a loved one. Since parents view educators as a trusted resource, it is a good idea to be familiar with services offered in the community that can provide additional support to families.

Attend community events and health fairs in your area to educate yourself about available services. Collect flyers and business cards when you attend events and display them for the families in your program. Consider using a three-ring binder or poster board that parents can easily view. Place the materials in a designated parent information area and create a sign that lets parents know there are a variety of resources available for them. Invite parents to email you if they prefer to get resources this way.

It is also important to attend professional conferences and trainings in order to continue to expand your knowledge of

child development and current learning trends. Familiarize yourself with developmental milestones, such as those outlined in the *California Preschool Learning Foundations*, which are available online at <https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/cd/re/psfoundations.asp>. Conduct observations of children on a regular basis using the Desired Results Developmental Profile (DRDP) assessment tool available at <https://www.desiredresults.us> and be prepared to answer questions parents may have about their child's development and refer them to specialists if they request additional assistance.

If you would like assistance gathering information about community services, or help locating child development trainings in your area, contact your local Resource and Referral (R&R) Program through Child Care Aware at (800) 424-2246, or visit the Child Care Aware website at <http://childcareaware.org>.



# Self-Regulation Skills



feelings that they have been reading to the children for a couple of weeks, so the stories are familiar. There are also two activities that offer children an opportunity to practice turn-taking and waiting. Notice that the children who are waiting are encouraged to do something active like dance or catch bubbles.

Children gradually develop routines and coping mechanisms that help them learn how to regulate their thoughts, feelings, and bodies. Most self-regulation skills are learned during social situations. Support the development of self-regulation skills by providing children with the opportunity to play together and practice waiting for turns, negotiating, and resolving conflicts independently. Support children's ability to negotiate by labeling their emotions and teaching them techniques for calming themselves down when they are upset. Model how to do deep breathing by pretending to blow on a candle and smell a flower, or use pinwheels to practice breathing. During story time or play, ask questions such as, "How does she feel? How would that make you feel? What can she do to feel better?" Having conversations about feelings helps children develop emotional literacy and self-regulation skills.

Games and activities that involve children stopping and starting their bodies also develop a child's self-regulation. Taking turns on a slide, playing Red Light/Green Light, Freeze Tag, or Simon Says are just a few examples. With practice, children learn when to step back from a stressful situation, calm down, reflect on what to do next, and strengthen their ability to remain focused during tasks. Self-control and the ability to stay focused are important skills for school readiness.

Source: *California Preschool Learning Foundations, Volume 1* by the California Department of Education (Sacramento, 2008).

## SUPPORTING SELF-REGULATION

Developing self-regulation skills takes time and practice. Adults can support children by offering activities that promote the development of self-control, and by anticipating what situations may be challenging for children. Situations where children are expected to wait often pose a challenge. For example, children waiting in line to wash their hands may begin to push or shove each other. Educators can anticipate this struggle and support children by singing songs and sending children one or two at a time to wash their hands.

Other factors that can cause challenges are transitioning from one activity to another, working on a project with a group of children, and experiencing hunger, lack of sleep, or illness. Consider the following question from the *California Preschool Learning Foundations*: "What aspects of your program are most likely to present self-regulation challenges to children? What could you modify to help children with these challenges?"

Source: *California Preschool Learning Foundations, Volume 1* by the California Department of Education (Sacramento, 2008).



## Easy Vegetable Tortellini Soup

Read the book *Stone Soup* by Marcia Brown before lunch. Then invite children to talk about the things they are grateful for while you eat this soup together. This recipe serves six.

### Ingredients

- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1/2 medium onion
- 1 teaspoon garlic powder
- 1 medium carrot
- 1 stalk celery
- 5 cups vegetable broth
- 14 1/2 ounces diced tomatoes
- 1/2 teaspoon oregano
- 1/2 teaspoon basil
- 1/2 teaspoon parsley
- 1/4 teaspoon thyme
- 9 ounces tortellini pasta
- 3 cups chopped kale
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 teaspoon black pepper
- 1/4 cup grated parmesan cheese (optional)

### Instructions

Heat the olive oil in a large pot over medium heat. Chop the onion, carrot, and celery. Add the onions to the hot oil and cook them for two to three minutes until they are soft. Add the carrots and celery and cook for an additional 3 minutes. Add the broth, diced tomatoes, garlic powder, oregano, basil, parsley, and thyme to the pot. Bring the mixture to a boil, then add the tortellini, and cook it according to the package instructions. One minute before the tortellini is done, stir in the kale. Remove from heat and season with salt and pepper to taste. Sprinkle the parmesan cheese on top. Enjoy!

Source: Adapted from <https://www.superhealthykids.com/recipes> in September 2020.

# Winter Time Fun

Winter brings wonderful learning opportunities for children. They can learn new vocabulary, practice math and science concepts, and express themselves creatively while they explore the properties of rain, wind, fog, snow, and ice.

**Activity:** A Chubby Little Snowman

**Age group:** Infants

**What you need:** No materials are needed.

**What you do:** Lay babies on their backs in front of you. As you chant this rhyme, use gestures to illustrate the vocabulary. *A chubby little snowman* (hold your arms in front of you with fingertips together) *had a carrot for a nose* (tap your nose). *Along came a bunny* (make a fist with two fingers standing up like bunny ears), *and what do you suppose* (hold your hands out to the sides)? *The hungry little bunny* (rub your belly), *looking for his lunch* (shade your eyes and look around), *ate the snowman's nose* (tap your nose with your bunny hand); *nibble, nibble, crunch!*

**What they learn:** Infants listen to language and watch you match gestures to vocabulary. They also increase their ability to focus and pay attention for an increased amount of time.

**Activity:** Snowman Blocks

**Age group:** Toddlers

**What you need:** Different sizes of empty boxes that can be stacked, packing tape, white paint, black paint, orange paint, and paintbrushes.

**What you do:** Tape the empty cardboard boxes shut and invite toddlers to paint them white. Once the white paint dries, use the black paint to make a snowman face with a hat on one of the smaller boxes. Use orange paint to make the carrot nose. Use the orange and black paint to make buttons on the middle-sized boxes. Paint boots or shoes on the bottom of the largest boxes. Toddlers can now build a snowman out of the boxes. Place the snowman blocks in an open space for play. Talk to

children about which box has a face on it, which box has the buttons (belly), and which box goes on the bottom. Draw comparisons between the snowman bodies and the toddlers' bodies.

**What they learn:** Toddlers develop critical thinking skills, science concepts, language skills, motor development, and self-awareness with this activity.

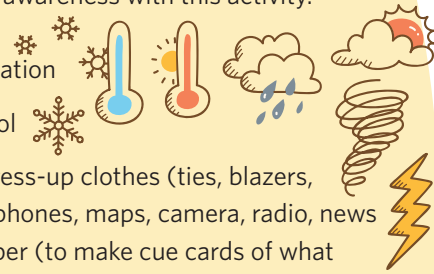
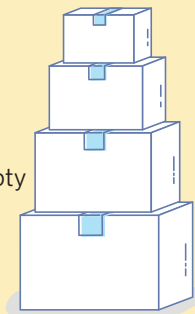
**Activity:** Weather Station

**Age group:** Preschool

**What you need:** Dress-up clothes (ties, blazers, dresses, skirts), microphones, maps, camera, radio, news desk (table), white paper (to make cue cards of what newscasters can say), temperature gauge, clip boards with paper and pencils, books, magazines, or newspaper reports about weather, and pictures of different kinds of weather (made or printed from the internet).

**What you do:** Ask children to help you make a weather station. Discuss what a weather station needs. How do you track weather? How do people find out what the weather will be like? Make a list of props together. Gather those items that do not need preparation such as maps and dress-up clothes. If you do not have the other props, children can make them as part of the activity. Once the weather station is assembled, children can prepare weather reports and film their own weather newscast. If possible, use a real camera or video camera to document children's work. Leave the weather station up for as long as children are interested in it.

**What they learn:** This activity allows children to build language skills, creativity, and critical thinking. It also connects technology, science, math, and geography concepts.



# Winter Time Fun

**Activity:** Rainy Day Math Song

**Age group:** School Age

**What you need:** No materials are needed.

**What you do:** Gather children together and invite them to sing a song with you. Explain that the song is a math and memory game just like the song "Bingo," except they will be saying the word "rainy." Sing the song through once, and then sing the song a second time, but replace one of the letters with a hand clap. Continue until the whole word is replaced with five hand claps. The song is sung to the tune of "Bingo" and goes like this: *There was a time when we got wet and rainy was the weather. R-A-I-N-Y, R-A-I-N-Y, R-A-I-N-Y, and rainy was the weather!* Ask the children to think of other weather words with five letters that can be chanted to this tune such as: snowy, foggy, windy, etc.

**What they learn:** Children practice sound discrimination, literacy, patterns, memory skills, and coordination.



• RAINY DAY •

## ABOUT CHS

For over 129 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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